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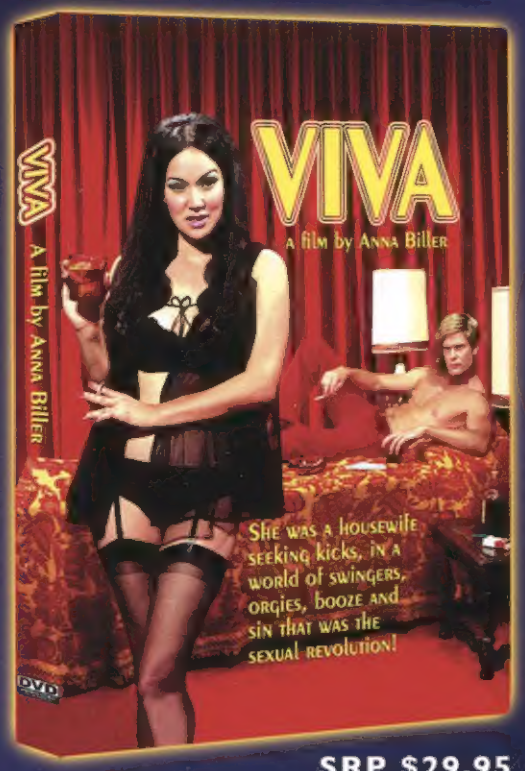

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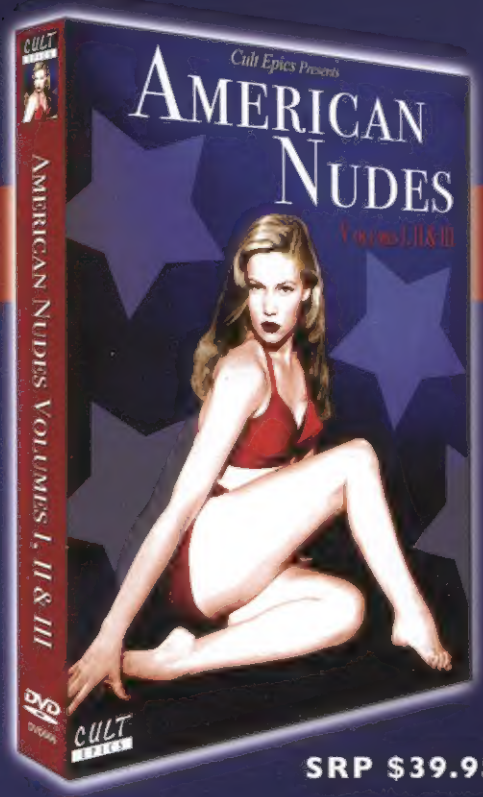

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SHOCK CINEMA No. 36

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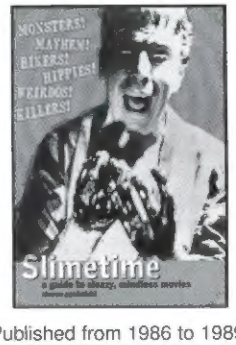
SLIMETIME

A GUIDE TO SLEAZY, MINDLESS MOVIES

by Steven Puchalski

with Tavis Riker, Brian J. Edwards and Steve Shapiro



Published from 1986 to 1989, SLIMETIME was a sickly-green newsletter that reviewed the tops in cult film dementia. This new edition unleashes the best, funniest and most opinionated reviews from that '80s 'zine. Containing over 500 reviews and a trio of genre essays (Blaxploitation, Biker movies and Hallucinogenic cinema), this updated **384 page** edition contains over **150 new reviews** — many from the first three, out-of-print issues of SHOCK CINEMA.

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EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Yes, it's time for yet another edition of SHOCK CINEMA. Admittedly, this issue took a little longer than I'd initially wanted, but the end result is crammed with offbeat reviews (including more DVD titles than ever before) and four terrific interviews. Plus I'm already amassing material for #37, which should be out in early-summer. First up in the Q&A dep't is **Richard Lynch**, whose screen work includes '70s gems (THE SEVEN-UPS), cult hits (THE NINTH CONFIGURATION) and B-movie action (INVASION U.S.A.), plus an impressive stage career. Director **Richard Rush** received a well-deserved 1981 Oscar-nomination for THE STUNTMAN and earlier helmed drive-in favorites like PSYCH-OUT, HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS and THE SAVAGE SEVEN. **Linda Haynes** made her film debut in Toho's LATITUDE ZERO, and later co-starred alongside Paul Newman (THE DROWNING POOL), Pam Grier (COFFY), Jason Miller (THE NICKEL RIDE), and William Devane (ROLLING THUNDER). Finally, **Jennifer Ashley** graced films such as THE POM POM GIRLS, THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS, TINTORERA, INSEMINOID, and also had a small role in De Palma's cult-masterpiece PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE.

I'll keep my political ranting brief for a change, because after eight long, painful years of 'W' and his despicable band of cronies and sycophants, I currently don't have a whole lot to bitch about, since a majority of the voting public finally pulled their heads out of their collective asses and chose the more *competent* candidate for a change... Meanwhile, John McCain proved that he wasn't so much of a 'maverick', as he was 'erratic' and 'inept' (and the less said about his frighteningly-asinine V.P. pic, the better)... Hey, I don't expect Obama to be perfect, but I'll give you odds that he'll be a vast improvement over Bush and his legacy of two botched wars, the Katrina clusterfuck, a stock market in freefall, first-time jobless rates at a 26-year high, a skyrocketing federal deficit, and a record-breaking disapproval rating.

On the totally different note, here's one of my latest peeves — the bastardization of the term 'cult movie'. Just because some distributor dusts off a mediocre old film that once played at the drive-in, or some amateurish genre effort that was briefly released on VHS in the '80s suddenly resurfaces on DVD, does *not* make them a 'cult classic'! Nowadays that title is being tacked onto *any* film that the general public has never heard of. The Charlton Heston dud SKYJACKED? Howard Hawks' LAND OF THE PHARAOHS? Forgettable drive-in turds such as THE HEARSE? Even worse, *new* films are now being marketed as 'cult movies.' Well, I grew up in an era when mind-droasting flicks like ROCKY HORROR, ERASERHEAD and BASKETCASE played NYC midnight shows to a small but rabid fanbase. Following in the footsteps of early-'70s phenoms EL TOPO, KING OF HEARTS and HAROLD AND MAUDE, they actually *earned* that label of 'cult movie' — you can't simply slap it onto some piece of cinematic shit, in hopes of convincing naive viewers that it's worth wasting their hard-earned cash on.

A lot of influential people familiar to SC readers have also died over the last few months — including Rudy Ray Moore, Bettie Page, Isaac Hayes, Donald E. Westlake, Cirio H. Santiago, Beverly Garland, Gerard Damiano, Roberta Collins, Sam Bottoms, Paul Greco — as well as two gentlemen who were highly influential to my love of cinema. First, there's the great Forrest J. Ackerman, who passed away at the age of 92. I'm sure my story will sound pretty familiar to many of you — I started reading comics at age 5, added MAD MAGAZINE to my library at age 9 and finally discovered FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND at age 10. I couldn't always find it on the local newsstands, and shelling out a whopping 60¢ for an issue wasn't cheap (that was the price of FIVE comics!), but I read every beloved issue from cover to cover and still have most of 'em... But the most personally depressing news I received recently concerned SLEAZOID EXPRESS-creator Bill Landis, who died from a heart attack at only 49 years old. I didn't really know Bill — we talked on the phone a couple times, several years ago — but he was a damned fine writer who laid the foundation for the cult-'n'-horror zine-scene of the late-'80s, and genuinely loved cinematic trash, long before it was fashionable to do so. My condolences go out to Michelle Clifford at this sad time. 12/30/08

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The ad deadline for SC#37 is **April 30, 2009. All checks MUST be made payable to Steven Puchalski.** Ads can be supplied as camera-ready art, or in TIFF, JPEG or PDF digital formats, and must fit within our guidelines: NO gratuitous nudity or language that will get us into hot water with prudish distributors. **Please inquire about prices for our full-color spots.** B&W interior ad rates are:

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Note: ALL potential review materials MUST arrive before **April 30, 2009.**

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Special thanks: Mark Johnston, Mike Decker, Craig Ledbetter, Michael Little, Paige Kay Davis, Phil Hall, Mike White, Bryan Brassfield.

Cover photos (from top, clockwise):
Richard Lynch in **GALACTICA 1980,**
Jennifer Ashley in **TINTORERA!,**
Linda Haynes in **LATITUDE ZERO.**

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DANGEROUS RHYTHM: An Interview With RICHARD LYNCH

By PAUL GAITA

Blond, gaunt character actor Richard Lynch has been unsettling moviegoers since the early 1970's. A New York native and veteran of that city's celebrated theater scene, he made his feature debut opposite longtime friend Al Pacino and Gene Hackman in 1973's SCARECROW. His turn as a predatory convict in that film preceded a long line of heels in movies like THE SEVEN-UPS (1973), THE FORMULA (1980), and THE NINTH CONFIGURATION (1980), as well as in TV-features like GOOD AGAINST EVIL (1977) and VAMPIRE (1979).

In typical character actor fashion, Lynch pursued interesting parts rather than fame, and was not above diving into lower-budgeted waters, as evidenced by his memorable turn as the hermaphroditic alien Messiah in Larry Cohen's GOD TOLD ME TO (1976), as well as fan favorites like DEATHSPORT (1978), THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER (1982) and INVASION U.S.A. (1985). The '80s and '90s saw Lynch at his busiest in virtually every market on the globe, from European grinders like Ruggero Deodato's CUT AND RUN (1985) to American quickies for the likes of Greydon Clark (THE FORBIDDEN DANCE, 1990) and Leo Fong (SHOWDOWN, 1991) with stops in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia along the way. No matter how high concept or lowbrow the script, Lynch brought to his roles a sense of edgy cool, honed by years of stage training and street living, and was invariably the most watchable and entertaining aspect of any project.

Note: This interview was originally conducted in 2002 for another now-defunct magazine. At that time, Lynch's career was in the midst of a lull, but in the years since then, he has returned to regular appearances in features, most notably as Michael Myers' principal in Rob Zombie's remake of HALLOWEEN (2007). That film has been documented in detail in other publications, and I believe that the information he provides on his earlier work more than makes up for its absence.

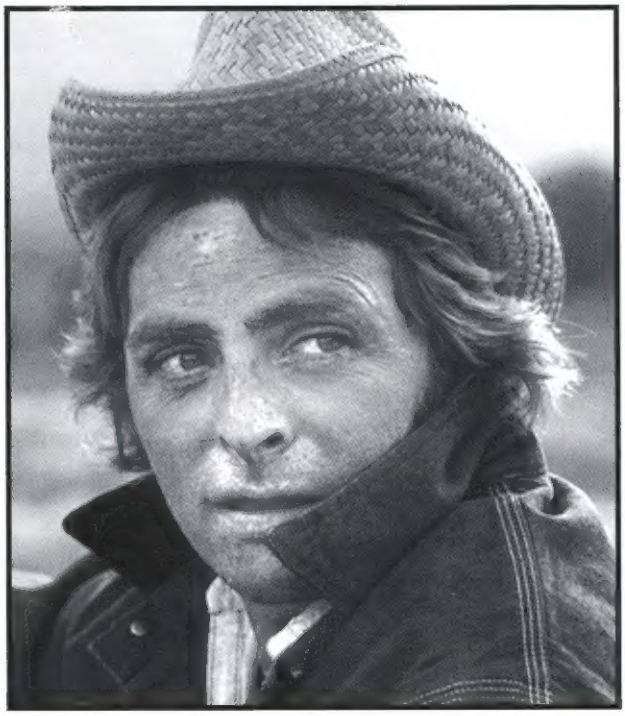
SHOCK CINEMA: Tell me about growing up in Brooklyn.

Richard Lynch: It was an innocent time, you know, when I grew up. I was born in Brooklyn in the Forties, just after World War II, which was a big economic boom in this country.

I was raised in a pretty insular world — it was a predominately Irish-Catholic neighborhood, though I ended up going to Boys High School at Putnam and Marcy, which was predominately black at the time. I was raised in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area in a family of eight — six children and my mother and father. My father worked on the Pennsylvania railroad for forty years. And like I said, it was a very insular world. New York City was another place altogether. I often recall that scene with Travolta in SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER when he tries to get his girlfriend to go over the bridge to Manhattan — that was a big event.

SC: Your biographies always mention an early interest in music. How did that develop?

Lynch: It developed by virtue of the fact that I had a lot of black influence in my life. I was raised on a lot of black artists — I can remember going to the Brooklyn Paramount as a kid, and there were only black acts [on the bill]. Rock and roll, or rhythm and blues — that was my culture.



Richard Lynch in SCARECROW

SC: When you say that there were black influences in your life, did that go beyond popular culture?

Lynch: I was raised in a multi-ethnic neighborhood with Italians, Jews, Poles, Irish and a lot of blacks, and like I said, I went to a predominately black high school. It was 98% black. And we were all heavily influenced by black music — it was a sense of escapism from growing up in tough, working-class families.

SC: You play a number of instruments, right?

Lynch: Ah, not a number. I like to doodle around on a saxophone.

SC: Did you ever consider making that your profession?

Lynch: In retrospect, I wish I had, but it wasn't in the cards at the time. I actually learned how to play some music by waiting around on sets in Hollywood. I started out on a flute that my former wife bought me one Christmas. There was all this downtime between scenes, and I started fooling around with it. Then I worked my way up to saxophone. I wouldn't call myself a musician. It's enough to keep me entertained.

SC: You went into the Marine Corps at 18.

Lynch: No, I went in just after I turned 16. I was a tough kid coming off the streets, and I had dropped out of high school, so it turned out to be a good thing for me. It straightened me out.

SC: Was that your intention in joining the Marines — to give yourself some focus?

Lynch: Well, I don't want to say that I was a juvenile delinquent. I was a little wild, and probably heading in the wrong direction. My older brother was a Marine, and he had been to Korea. So it seemed appropriate. I wanted to get out of my environment, and it worked out for me. It was a very dramatic part of my life, and it really formed me.

SC: You toured the Middle East as part of your service.

Lynch: I was all over the Middle East on my first trip out. I ended up making a tactical landing with Eisenhower in Beirut in 1958. It was supposed to have been a three or four month tour, but it ended up about eight or nine months on ship. I was also in a forward observation company on the Syrian border. And that's when it was just heating up. It was quite beautiful back then, but it was just starting to get ugly.

Fortunately, when it came time for me to re-up, which was around 1960, I knew that the military life was not for me, so I got out. One of my buddies rolled over and ended up in Vietnam.

SC: You got out of the military in 1960... What was your plan at that point?

Lynch: I was completely and totally confused. What happened was very interesting. I left this little nucleus of a neighborhood — my world in Brooklyn was no more than five or eight blocks in any direction. And so coming from Brooklyn to New York was not unlike coming from Des Moines, Iowa. It was an unknown place for me.

When I got out of the Marine Corps, it was like the old saying — once you've been to Paris, you can't go back to the farm. So I ended up in New York's Greenwich Village, and I arrived in a very vital time — the early '60s. There was a lot of stuff, politically and socially, happening there at that time. My intention was to attend NYU, but I didn't have the wherewithal to do that. But they had a program where if you worked for the university, you could take some courses in the evening. So I thought, let me try this. And the more I spent in the Village in those years, the more I gravitated towards the poets and writers and musicians there. I found myself caught up in that whole art movement.

SC: So when did theater become your main focus?

Lynch: That's a funny story. I had met a woman who was attending the university and who was the heiress to a particular fortune that I'd rather not name. I became involved with her and moved in

with her, and also got to know her former boyfriend, who was a great guy. He was also a degenerate gambler (laughs) who could sell you the Brooklyn Bridge. So eventually, I had a falling out with the gal and moved in with this guy, whose first name was Freddy. We had an apartment on New York's Upper East Side, and I was working, and he was doing whatever he did to raise money. So one day, he tells me that he's lost the rent. And I say, "What are we going to do? We're gonna get evicted." He tells me to not to worry about it.

At that time, the Americana Hotel was *the* place to be in New York. It had just opened up and he passed both of us off as employees of the federal government. So we checked into the Presidential suite, and we got into the big numbers — he was ordering clothes through them, and so on. So the credit manager for the hotel, he was an Irish immigrant, and he finally caught on to what we were doing, and wanted some money for the bill, which was up to about $1200 — a lot of money in those days. But he also knew that if he blew the whistle on us, he'd lose his job for letting us take the room. So now we're working with the credit manager to pay this bill, and eventually, I got a job as a night desk clerk at the hotel.

The night manager was an actor who had come up with Steve McQueen and George Maharis, and one night he said, *"You should be the actor."* I thought he was crazy, but as things evolved, he kept telling about theater and acting, and he introduced me to the Herbert Berghof Studios in Greenwich Village.

Richard Lynch goes for a ride in THE SEVEN-UPS

SC: What do you think the manager saw in you to make that suggestion?
Lynch: That's hard for me to say. I think it was just a raw and innocent and open talent — I never asked him. But he basically sponsored me into the world of theater.

SC: You hadn't considered acting before this?
Lynch: No, but I always knew that there was a performer in me somewhere. That's why I was terribly attracted to different forms of music. I had music in my soul. It opened up a world of knowledge to me, and I was fascinated by it.

SC: You mentioned Herbert Berghof, but you also trained with Lee Strasberg, right?
Lynch: Yes, I eventually moved up to Carnegie Hall and trained with him.

SC: What did you learn from Berghof and Strasberg? Is there a way to distill what you took from them?
Lynch: Herbert was a lot more theatrical and external in his approach — along the lines of Michael Chekhov. Lee was more internal, coming from a lot of emotional recalls, a lot of exercise work and early Stanislavsky. There was a big division in those days on their approaches to the craft.

SC: Did you have a preference?
Lynch: At the risk of sounding pretentious, I drew from each and I drew from the streets. I remember Stanislavsky had this quote, *"The man, the actor."* I was just so raw and open to all kinds of experiences, and I drew from all of them. But I did lean a bit more towards Lee.

SC: I have one of your earliest stage appearances in "The Devils" in 1965.
Lynch: That's accurate. That was my Broadway debut with Jason Robards and Anne Bancroft. Ironically, the first professional acting job I ever did was that religious program, LAMP UNTO MY FEET [a religious program that ran on CBS from 1948 to 1972]. It was on at like 5:30 in the morning. That was the first time I really stepped out and did it. And I was very active in fringe theater at La Mama and the Open Theatre. I banged around to all those theater movements. So many things were happening in New York in those days — it was so vital.

SC: What were you appearing in those days?
Lynch: I was banging back and forth between two productions downtown off Broadway... David Wheeler was doing a new play, John Arden's LIVE LIKE PIGS. A friend of mine was about to leave that show and go on the road, and at the same time, I was slated to take over for Jon Voight in VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE for Ulu Grosbard, who was directing. What happened is that they kept hesitating, and I ended up doing LIVE LIKE PIGS and VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE at the same time.

It was very challenging, but I was having a great time. I was a theater actor, and that was my life — and it was a way of life that I was committed to. I loved everything about it.

SC: I read that you became a lifetime member of the Actors Studio in 1970.
Lynch: In those days, there weren't as many people who wanted to make their life in the theater. It was terribly insecure, most people didn't want to do it, so it was a very tight-knit group. You would frequent a lot of the same places, like Jimmy Ray's up in Hell's Kitchen on Eighth Avenue and 46th Street. And you picked up a lot of information by associating with other actors — what plays were coming in, what was going out, who was happening. And there were all kinds of different philosophies and places to go to study, but the Studio always held its own. It was the crème de la crème of the acting world, and it still is.

I came up with the likes of guys like Al Pacino and Robert De Niro — that was my group that was coming through. And it was inevitable that everyone would try to audition for the Actors Studio. I did it and got in.

SC: How did you feel about that?
Lynch: I felt like I'd found a home and a place. It was designed for professional actors to work on their craft away from the eye of the public, and it was a very exciting prospect.

SC: Your first national TV credits start around 1972 — is that accurate?
Lynch: (thinking) There's a story here. After I joined the Actors Studio, I got involved with a guy named Al Pacino. He was a hot new item coming on, and Al had just won the Tony for DOES THE TIGER WEAR A NECKTIE? We had gotten to know each other, and David Rabe had produced a play called THE BASIC TRAINING OF PAVLO HUMMEL. So Al had a little more clout after the Tony, and he put a group of actors together in association with a theater company in Boston. It was a great company, and we were going to go on the road and do PAVLO HUMMEL. But at that time, he had just finished THE GODFATHER, which at the time, nobody thought very much about — another gangster movie.

We opened in the Charles Theater in Boston at the same time the movie opened, and the rest was history. And while we were doing the play, he asked me if I wanted to do a movie with him — this was prior to any of my TV appearances. I thought "What the hell — I don't know what the hell you do [in a movie], but sure, why not?" So he told me that when we got back to New York, he'd have Martin Bregman, who was his manager at the time, get me a script. I thought it was just going to be a couple of days' work — you know, you open the car door, you close the car door — but it turned out to be the third lead in the film SCARECROW with Gene Hackman, who had just won the Academy Award for THE FRENCH CONNECTION. So Al gave me my film career.

SC: Riley, your character in SCARECROW, is a pretty scary character, but you managed to humanize him in a couple of scenes — he tells Pacino to not make fun of him because he's sensitive, and in the scene where Hackman calls him out at the hog farm. He knows he's going to pay for what he's done. How do you get into that mindset?
Lynch: You've always got to find the humanity in the character, no matter how bad he is. If you play him on the money, you're in trouble. We're going back a few years here, but I just tried to find out who he was. He wasn't gay — he was just a guy doing time. And it was a part that I couldn't turn down — it was a terrific moment to get a break in film. So yeah, I just stayed off playing him tough.

SC: What did you learn about acting on film from SCARECROW?
Lynch: I was spoiled, because Jerry Schatzberg, who directed that movie, was very patient, and Al was a personal friend. It was a very small group of people working on it, and they were very tight-knit. I wasn't pressured or pushed into anything, and I tried to approach it theatrically. And of course, you learn — you do it enough times and you learn the film craft, which is very different from theater. You're restrained a lot — there's only so much that you can do. You don't have the liberty to move about as much as you'd like to. And it's a very tight and technical medium — it's a director's medium,

not an actor's medium. So you have to learn camera and sound and lighting, and while it's a restrictive medium, it's also a powerful one.

SC: Where was SCARECROW shot?
Lynch: It started out in Bakersfield, California, but it was kind of a road movie — it moved. I picked them up in Colorado, and most of my stuff was in Pueblo in the Colorado State Penitentiary. Everything was shot on location.

SC: What was the experience of working with Hackman?
Lynch: He's a terrific actor, but there was a lot of tension when I got there. There was a conflict between Al and Gene, I think. I never crossed the Mendoza Line on that, but I think they were having difficulties. Remember, I was a close friend of Al's, so Gene was a little bit heavy on me. He was a little hard. I almost got close to losing the job. He carried the weight in the picture, and all he had to do was say, *"Who is this clown?"* and I was gone. He was a stickler on things — he wasn't loose, and I was used to working with Al and being very spontaneous. In fact, Pacino took me aside and said, *"Just keep your mouth shut and I'll deal with this. Just do your part."* I thought that was very compassionate, because at that time, I had a son who was just a little baby.

But I will say that when the dailies came out, Gene Hackman came out and shook my hand and said, *"You gave a great performance."*

SC: What sort of feedback did you get from the film?
Lynch: I wouldn't go see my movies. I always felt kind of funny looking at myself on the screen. So long after the film came out, Pacino called me up and asked me to meet him at the Ginger Man restaurant for a drink, which we would do on occasion. And he asked me, *"Did you see the movie?"* Because at the time, there was a line around the corner for it. I said no, and he said, *"Man, you gotta go see it!"* And he turned to me and said, *"You're gonna be a star, Richard. You'll get a career out of this."* He was a very giving actor in a lot of ways. He's very eccentric in certain ways, but I have to say that as a result of that relationship, I walked into a film career.

So one afternoon, I went to see the film. I didn't like *me*, of course — I didn't care for the character. But it did pan out for me.

SC: In '73, you were working in the theater and on film. You did David Rabe's THE ORPHAN.
Lynch: That's right, and at the same time, I was gearing up to do Phil D'Antoni's THE SEVEN-UPS with Roy Scheider.

SC: Did you have any expectations for the film, given that D'Antoni had produced THE FRENCH CONNECTION and BULLITT?
Lynch: Yeah. He had a good track record. But I got to know Sonny Grosso, who produced the movie — he was Eddie Egan's real partner, whom Roy portrayed in THE SEVEN-UPS. That was an interesting set, believe me. Interesting in the sense that there was a lot going on with the New York Police Department at the time. This was right after the Serpico thing broke, and everyone on the show were cops who were moonlighting. All of the ADs and unit production managers were all active police officers. And Sonny had a rather... interesting career in the police department.

This was also at the time when Al Pacino was doing the movie SERPICO, and I remember going up to Phil D'Antoni and asking for a couple hours off so I could go and audition for the film. And oh, I got a real strange reaction from Grosso and the rest of the cops. They basically told me, *"You don't want to do that movie."* They had a real hard-on for Serpico, if you'll pardon the expression.

With Peter Fonda in OPEN SEASON

Robin Clark and Lynch in THE FORMULA

SC: Your next film was OPEN SEASON (1974), which caught a lot of flack for its violence.
Lynch: Very strange movie. I went off with William Holden and Peter Fonda to shoot that movie in Madrid, Spain. It didn't see the light of day much over here, but it got a pretty good play over in Europe.

SC: What was your experience in working overseas?
Lynch: I enjoyed it. The European lifestyle is more laid back and cavalier and easier than working in the industry over here.

SC: What do you recall about the director of OPEN SEASON, Peter Collinson?
Lynch: I got along with Peter, but he was pretty tough. He was a bit of a cantankerous guy. I don't want to speak ill of him, because he's passed away. But what I recollect is that I showed up and I did my work. He was a very compete director, but he had a lot of difficulties. He had a lot of personality conflicts with a lot of people, but I seemed to have gotten around that.

SC: What was your experience in working with William Holden?
Lynch: Very interesting. He was a quiet and gentle man. Showed up out of nowhere with his son Scott — they'd come down from Switzerland. I was very impressed to have the opportunity to work with someone like William Holden. I grew up on his movies, and I still had the naiveté of a kid from Brooklyn who's suddenly sitting on a movie set with William Holden in Madrid, Spain. He gave me some very useful advice — *"Kid, you're lucky to get one hit out of every ten movies."* He was very realistic and pragmatic.

SC: In '75, you're back on stage with Sam Shepard's ACTION, which won the Obie Award.
Lynch: I was at the American Place Theater sharing a dressing room with Richard Gere. He was doing the curtain raiser called KILLER'S HEAD, another Shepard piece — a monologue.

SC: Were you feeling a pull to work in either film or theater, or were you happy to move between both?
Lynch: I found it pretty easy to do both. I preferred theater, but film was a necessity. I remember once when Al won an award, he thanked the films for giving him more of an opportunity to work in the theater.

SC: You were also doing a lot of TV at this time.
Lynch: I think one of the first shows I got called to do was BRONK (1975) with Jack Palance. Even though I'd done three or four movies by that time, I was still a New Yorker from the theater community. But I was married at the time, and I had a child, and you don't make that kind of money in the theater. So all of a sudden, the Coast started calling me for guest appearances — I did the pilot for STARSKY AND HUTCH, I believe.

SC: In 1976 you're with Vanessa Redgrave for Ibsen's THE LADY FROM THE SEA at Circle in the Square.
Lynch: Right — I came back from California for the silver anniversary of Circle in the Square, and it was a wonderful part called The Stranger. It was quite a stellar evening, with the likes Rudolf Nureyev and Jacqueline Onassis in the audience, whom I met. That was a very strange feeling. I was locking up my dressing room, and I heard these heels clicking down the hallway. And as I stood up, I was nose to nose with her. I felt like I was looking at a cover of *Look* magazine. She was very kind — she said, *"Are you who I think you are?"* referring to the character I played. And my comeback was, "Are you who I think *you* are?" Tony Rich, who was the director, got really freaked out and said, *"Uh, well, thank you very much, Richard — we'll see you at Sardi's,"* and he whisked her off. But it was a wonderful experience — I got to know Vanessa and meet her father, Sir Michael Redgrave.

SC: What was your reaction to the script for GOD TOLD ME TO?
Lynch: It was such a strange script, but I was really young and I just wanted to work. My theory was

the same as Bogart's — if you get a job, do it. I didn't have a nomination behind me, so I couldn't be that select. And I loved working, so at the time, I thought, "Okay, let's see what this is about?"

SC: Your screen time in the movie is relatively brief, though it's completely memorable. Did you have any reservations with taking such a small part?
Lynch: No, not at all. I don't have a problem with a cameo or a co-starring role. I just wanted to take the job and go to work.

SC: In '76, you were in Mississippi to make a movie called THE PREMONITION.
Lynch: Yeah, for Robert Alan Schnitzer. Loved the movie... I had a good time on it. I liked the character — he was very unique. He was a mime in a carnival — it was ESP and the metaphysical world. I thought I did a good job in the movie.

SC: The following year, 1977, was one of your busiest years. Among your projects were two TV pilots — ROGER AND HARRY and GODD AGAINST EVIL.
Lynch: Boy, what 1977 reminds me of was THE BASIC TRAINING OF PAVLO HUMMEL, which I mentioned earlier. Al was trying to the rights from Joe Papp to take the company to the West End in London. I think that Papp was reluctant to relinquish the rights, and that was the end of that. So in 1977, Pacino called me to do a revival of HUMMEL in New York. He said, *"Are you in or are you out?"* And I was in. Guys who were in the original company were flying in from all over the world, and we opened at the Longacre to standing room only and terrific. That's what that year reminds me.

SC: Who else was in the original company?
Lynch: Jackie Kehoe from THE STING, Lance Henriksen, me, Pacino, Paul Guilfoyle, and a variety of actors from Boston.

Richard Lynch in THE PREMONITION

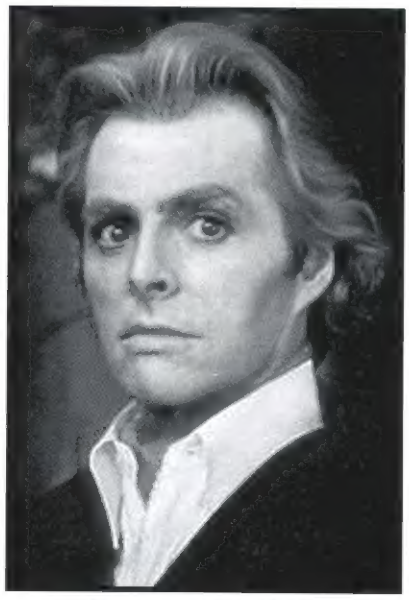
SC: Lemme run a few titles by you — first is STUNTS (1977) with Robert Forster.
Lynch: Yes, for William Panzer and Peter S. Davis, who later on had great success with the HIGHLANDER series. That was one of their original productions — it was originally called WHO'S KILLING THE STUNT MEN? That was me and Robert Forster and Ray Sharkey and Joanna Cassidy, and we shot that up in San Luis Obispo.

SC: DELTA FOX (1979)? That's your first lead in a movie, I believe.
Lynch: Yes, for Ferd and Beverly Sebastian. I had the good fortune of working on that picture with some of the legends I grew up with, like John Ireland. I'm always impressed by senior actors who went before me — I remember the day Richard Jaeckel walked on the set and I looked at him and thought, oh my God, the man has not changed since GUADALCANAL DIARY. He was about 60 at the time, but he still looked like that kid in the movie [note: Lynch declined to comment on the Sebastians].

SC: How about THE BARON (1977)?
Lynch: Yes — *Baron Wolfgang von Tripps*! Very funny story about that — it was the first time I was the only white guy in a predominately black cast. I think a fellow named like Phil Fenty, who was involved in SUPERFLY and the sequel, was the director, and the West Indian actor, Calvin Lockhart, was the lead. There was an actor in it named Charles McGregor, who was a pretty tough guy. He did a lot of hard time in the joints in New York. He had gotten out and turned over a leaf, and was very active with the youth in Harlem.

I'll never forget one night when we were shooting in the middle of August — it was what you'd call a "dog day night." We were up near 137th and Lennox Avenue, and it was the first of the month, and everyone was out on the street, and they were all watching the movie. I was dressed in a white ice cream suit, so I white on white, you know what I mean? Blond hair, blue eyes, panama hat and a white suit, and I had to come down Lennox Avenue, stop, get out of a limousine, walk towards the camera, and then I go into a restaurant. Now, this was a time when it was not too cool to be in Harlem, and I thought I was gonna catch a lot of flack. So the car rolls down Lennox, and it was a wonderful moment — the driver opened the door for me, and I just tucked it in like, "You're not gonna *fuck* with me." I stepped into the key light, and you could've heard a pin drop. I looked like an apparition. It totally took me aback, because I thought I would get all these hoots and catcalls, but you couldn't hear a thing. So I trucked across Lennox Avenue, and just before I reached the camera, this little boy steps out and says, *"My God, look who's come to save Harlem!"* That cracked the whole place up.

SC: How about DEATHSPORT for Roger Corman?
Lynch: Yeah, it was one of the last movies that Roger directed. They had a lot of trouble with the original director [Nicholas Niciphor] — David Carradine was having real difficulties with him. There had been an incident between the original director and Claudia Jennings, and David had jumped up to protect her. So Roger bumped him and directed the rest of the movie in his inimitable, Ivy League way. I think there was still about two or three weeks of shooting left at that point.



Lynch in VAMPIRE

SC: The TV-movie VAMPIRE seems to be one of your films that people remember the most.
Lynch: Wonderful. It was one of Stephen Bochco's first projects — a project intended to go to series. And boy, I was hoping that it would go. Ironically, it aired at the same time as Pope John Paul II's visit, so it did not get a green light to go further. Jason Miller and I tried to take it over to Johnny Carson's production company to make at least three Movies of the Week. We got great reviews, and I had a terrific time playing the vampire. Who doesn't want to play one?

SC: Do you remember STEEL (1979)? It was produced by its star, Lee Majors.
Lynch: It was also produced by Peter Davis and Bill Panzer. I was there with Art Carney, who I loved to work with — I was a big fan of THE HONEYMOONERS. And the rest of the cast I knew very well, like Bob Tessier. I also got to know A.J. Bakunas, who was at the time, one of the premier high fall stuntmen. He was in competition with another very well-known stunt guy named Dar Robinson. And A.J. was the guy who developed the bag that stunt guys use today. Unfortunately, he died during the making of this movie. A.J. was doubling for George Kennedy in a fall from 35 stories off a building, and at the time, Dar Robinson had just set the record for falling from a building. So he went to Lee and said that if he would make the adjustment [to jump from a greater height]. And he did, and A.J. died. I think that was one of the motivations for Lee to create THE FALL GUY.

SC: You were supposed to play George DiCenzo's part in THE NINTH CONFIGURATION, right?
Lynch: I really wanted it. I had heard about the project, and I contacted Bill Blatty out in Malibu. He said, *"Richard, I'd love to have you, but the part is already cast. But would you take another part?"* I told him that I'd take any part — I just wanted to be in this movie, which was such a unique project.

SC: You ended up with a great part in the film, and your repartee with Steve Sandor is among its best moments.
Lynch: (laughs) There's a really strange story about that. Well, it was a strange movie and a strange company of actors. There was another actor who was playing Stacy Keach's role, and he just flipped out — the vibe there was too weird. And Michael Moriarty was originally playing the role that Scott Wilson played in the film, and something went down — he wanted out too. So Scott Wilson came over with me, and he moved up to Moriarty's part. It was a very unusual movie.

SC: Would you say it was a troubled movie, or it was just the atmosphere in Hungary?
Lynch: The environment in the ether was strange. You have to remember that this was before the Iron Curtain came down.

SC: THE FORMULA is another one of your favorite projects.
Lynch: Yeah, that was an interesting project. The screenwriter, Steven Shagan (who also wrote the novel on which it's based) had been nominated for an Oscar for SAVE THE TIGER, and you can't say enough about John Avildsen. I had worked with George C. Scott before on stage in THE LION IN WINTER. I got a call from John Avildsen to come over to MGM to audition for a part in the movie. It was for only the first part of the film — they were going to hire someone else to come back for the second half. But I convinced John Avildsen to bring me back for the latter part of the picture — I told him that he would lose continuity by bringing in another actor. So I was able to convince him, and then Dick Smith came in and worked on me for a screen test.

SC: How much time did you have with Marlon Brando, both on and off screen?
Lynch: I didn't have an opportunity to work with Brando in the film, but I did spend some time with him on the set. I got to know him — very funny and easygoing guy, and very curious about my makeup. And of course, I was in total awe of him. But I'll tell you, I was in the chair getting made up, and my eyes were cast down on the makeup table. And I felt something change in the room, and when I looked into the mirror in front of me, Marlon Brando was standing behind him. I'll never forget that feeling that the atmosphere had changed — that was the presence he brought into the room.

SC: What was the challenge of playing a character with such a tremendous age range?
Lynch: It was a huge challenge, but my biggest concern was that I didn't come off as some hokey American with a German accent. So I found this kid — I think he was a friend of someone's daughter and was a student traveling around the country — and hired him to tutor me with my lines. And to this day, I can remember every German line I said in the movie.

SC: You appeared in two episodes of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA (1978), which has an enduring fan base. Did you anticipate that this would be one of your more enduring projects?
Lynch: Well, I did two appearances on GALACTICA itself, and then ironically, prior to shooting THE FORMULA, I got signed to do GALACTICA 1980. But they knew I was going off to do that film, so they dropped me for a while so that I could do it. And I remember getting a desperate call from my agent at the end of shooting on THE FORMULA — he said, *"You've gotta get back here right away, because they may cancel this, and you've got to get on it."* So I showed up on set in makeup and costume. The show was canceled almost immediately, but I got paid for eight or nine episodes I never did thanks to my contract. It was one up for us. (laughs) I never realized how much of a play that thing really had in the cult world.

I got to know Richard Hatch pretty well, and he called me about a year ago along with John Colicos to do cameos in a trailer he was shooting to try and recreate GALACTICA. He ran into a lot of conflict in doing it, though.

SC: 1982 is the year of another big cult favorite of yours, THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER.
Lynch: I have to give the credit for that film's following to Albert Pyun. He was a young, imaginative director who made this movie on the strength of EXCALIBUR. The producer, Brandon Chase, retired very comfortably as a result of that movie. I think he bought a few race horses. I had a very good time on that movie.

SC: And you won a Saturn Award for your performance. You were playing in a lot of science fiction and fantasy titles in the '80s, and more than your share of heavies. Were you at all worried about typecasting?
Lynch: Typecasting set in for me the day I beat the shit out of Al Pacino. (laughs) Typecasting set in with SEVEN-UPS. I could have stopped, but I didn't have much of a choice in that. The parts were presented to me, and I wanted to work as an actor. Most of those parts were the antagonist, so in the end, I established myself as a Hollywood heavy. However, I know other actors who chose not to do something like that, and they've had very marginal careers. I've had a career. I've survived attrition, and I've been able to work for the better part of thirty-five-plus years.

Susan Ruttan and Richard Lynch in BAD DREAMS

SC: Let's jump to 1985 and INVASION U.S.A.
Lynch: Terrific. Had a great time on it, and it was the beginning of my relationship with Golan-Globus and Chuck Norris.

SC: Were you surprised by its popularity?
Lynch: Well, when I met Chuck, he was very naïve at the time, and he came to me and said that he was very taken aback by the popularity he was experiencing. And in a very indirect way, he asked me how he should handle it and how he could avoid screwing it up. He basically told me, *"Look, I'm not an actor, I'm an athlete."* I really liked him. He was a very kind man and easy to work with.

SC: So what did you tell him?
Lynch: I said stay close to your family and you'll be alright. Fortunately for him, he went to sign a seven or eight picture deal with Cannon.

SC: What was your impression of Menahem Golan?
Lynch: He is the supreme bandit of Hollywood. (laughs) The Godfather of Israel — any producer from Israel, they owe it all to Menahem. I know he has a reputation for being a dastardly guy, but he fed my family, and he's always been straight with me. In fact, I just came back from working with him recently on a little martial arts picture in Bangkok [this was 2003's FINAL COMBAT, one of Golan's last English-language movies]. I remember Chuck telling me at the time, *"If you're going to work with Menahem, get your cash on the barrelhead."* There's no deal on the back end, no points — it's cash and carry. What can I say about Menahem? Tough old Israeli Jew who's been loyal to me and I've been loyal to him. He's one of the few producers I've known who's driven out to me and knocked on the kitchen window.

SC: And we should add that you do not live close to Hollywood.
Lynch: There's no bullshit with Menahem. And he's an artist in his own right.

SC: Around this time, you also made your first film in Italy, CUT AND RUN (1985). You mention on the DVD that you loved working with Ruggero Deodato, but others have had a different opinion.
Lynch: Ah, Ruggero Deodato. Yeah, he's all bullshit. He's a little man, he's short, and he's got a big mouth. But I love Ruggero — I had more fun working with him than anybody else. I know all about his crassness and his brutality, but you can't let it reach you. He's very talented, and he can be very funny — you have to have a thick skin with him. He'll test your mettle, but when he knows that you know he's bullshitting you... I had a lot of good times with him. I've done about four projects with Ruggero — I did CUT AND RUN, I did THE BARBARIANS (1987), I did a film with him called WE'RE ANGELS (1997), and then I was with him in Zimbabwe for a thing called THINKING OF AFRICA (1998), which was sort of a take-off on DOCTOR QUINN, MEDICINE WOMAN.

SC: Talk about the difficulties of working on an Italian film in South America.
Lynch: (long laugh) I'll tell you how strange it was. We're on the Rio Orinoco, up by the border of Brazil and Venezuela in the Amazones, and we're about to do a very serious scene. Everybody gets quiet and settled down. Cameras are all in place, and we begin to do the scene. And as we're doing the scene, out of the corner of my eye, I see people picking the camera up and running away. And I have no idea what's going on. But this is how crazy the Italians were — there was a seaplane taking off from the river, and they wanted to get the shot. You never knew what was happening with them — it was absolute confusion, but it was fun. Always a lot of fun with Deodato.

SC: You worked with your brother Barry on a couple of pictures.
Lynch: Yes, my brother is a very funny and talented actor. I did a little independent with him called NIGHTFORCE (1987) and a comedy with Frank Stallone called THE GARBAGE MAN (1996).

SC: How did he get into the business?
Lynch: He kind of came to me and I helped him. I coached him into it, and he holds his own — he's now the artistic director for the Celtic Arts Center of Los Angeles. And he's made a pretty good

career for himself theatrically. He's concentrated most of his work on stage. We're very different — it's the difference between Little Joe and Hoss, with me being Hoss.

SC: LITTLE NIKITA (1988) was your first studio film in a while during the '80s. Talk about working with your co-stars, Sidney Poitier and River Phoenix.

Lynch: Interesting thing — all good experiences. Quite an honor to work with the legendary Sidney Poitier, a wonderful actor with great integrity. River Phoenix was a phenomenal talent — very edgy. He was a very clean, socially conscious actor — a potential James Dean. A major loss to our industry.

SC: You followed this up with BAD DREAMS (1988).

Lynch: They tried to spin it off from the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series. I signed a three-picture deal with Fox in the hopes that it would work. When you deal with those kinds of pictures, you can't get cheap. But they called it a no-frills production, which is exactly what it was. It could've taken off, but you have to put the money up on the screen, so it didn't take off.

SC: You were on a lot of TV during this period as well, most notably on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION.

Lynch: Oh yeah. Wanted to do it, because I wanted to stand on the bridge of the *Enterprise*. Even Colin Powell had stood on the bridge of the *Enterprise*. Everyone wants to do that. I was up for many of them, but I didn't get on it until that two-parter ("Gambit").

Steve Sandor, Scott Wilson and Richard Lynch in William Peter Blatty's THE NINTH CONFIGURATION

SC: One of your more recent television roles was on SIX FEET UNDER, which was a pleasant surprise.

Lynch: A little cameo. I don't want to add some ominous overtone to this interview, but 2002 has been a tragic year for me, because my only son suffered a severe hemorrhage and was in a coma for nine months [sadly, Lynch's son passed away three years after this interview]. In the middle of all this terrible tragedy, I got the call from SIX FEET UNDER, and ironically, my son Christopher suffers from AVM [arteriovenous malformations], which is what the lead in the show has. I found that weird — you know, does art imitate life or does life imitate art?

A lot of my friends said, *"You've got to go to work and get your mind off it."* So they offered me this cameo, and I did it with Joanna Cassidy. I just floated through it.

SC: For most of the '80s and '90s, you were averaging about three or four movies a year, and as you said, you were traveling a lot. What sort of effect did that pace have on your life offscreen?

Lynch: I've been single for a long time, and my life is my work outside of my son. For me, that's part of the appeal — I get wet between the thighs when you give me an airline ticket. (laughs) It's like the old "Paladin" series — have fuel card, will travel. I just love the work, and I'm very fortunate to be consistent in it. I would love to do more 'A' pictures, but however it comes down... who knows, maybe in the back end I'll get lucky.

SC: You had a fun part in ALLIGATOR 2: THE MUTATION (1991). I heard that was originally filmed for television.

Lynch: No, that was shot as a feature. That was me and Joe Bologna (laughs) and Brock Peters and Steve Railsback. That was fun, but I nearly lost my life on that movie. There was a scene we shot up in Lake Castaic, and they took me out on the lake in a canoe with some kind of makeshift life preserver around my neck. They wanted to get a helicopter shot of me on top of the gator, and when the helicopter came over, it sucked all of the air up and threw me under the water at the same time. It was a very spooky / CONTINUED on PG. 48

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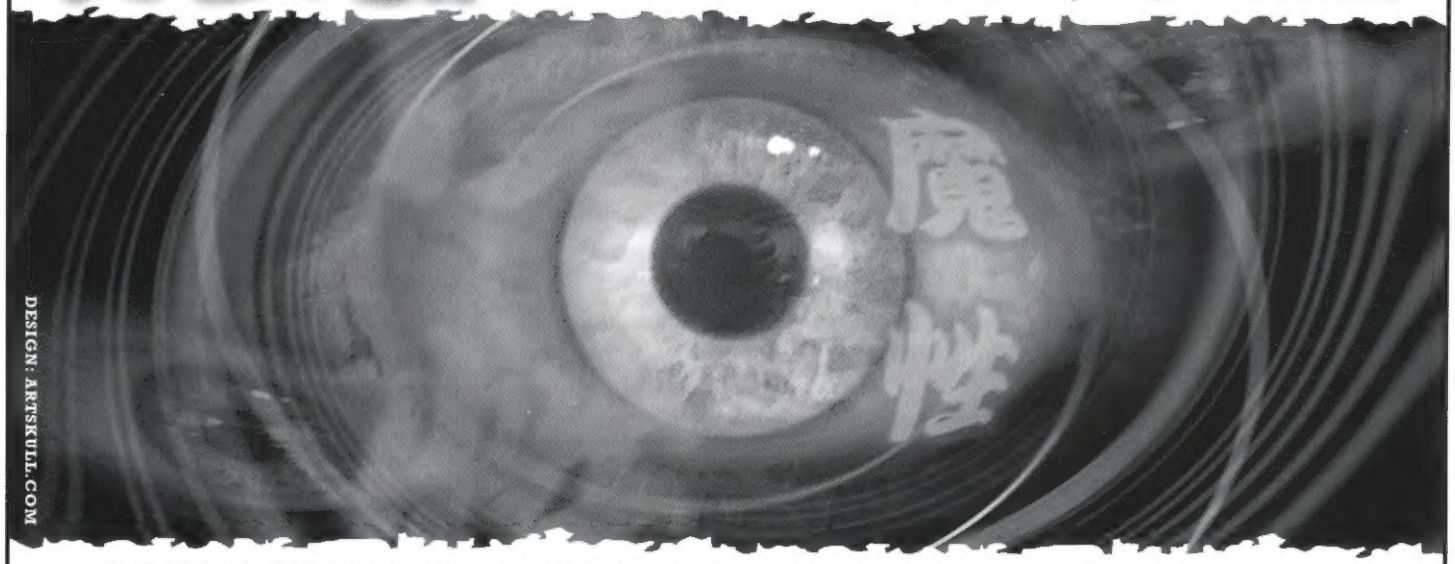
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SAVAGE CINEMA: An Interview With Director RICHARD RUSH

By BRIAN ALBRIGHT

Of all the new directors that emerged in Hollywood in the 1960's, Richard Rush has had one of the most erratic careers. After a clutch of exploitation films that are now considered classics of their kind, Rush achieved both commercial and critical success with major studio pictures. But over the years his output as a director slowed to a trickle, in part because he was selective (he turned down a number of high-profile films, including JAWS and KLUTE) and in part because of a dedication to his own directorial vision. He was involved in epic battles with his producers and distributors on both THE STUNT MAN (1980) and COLOR OF NIGHT (1994), and was bumped off of AIR AMERICA (1990), a film that Rush (an avid pilot) had originally written.

One of the first students in UCLA's nascent film program in the 1950's, New York-born Rush made his directorial debut with TOO SOON TO LOVE (1960), a teen melodrama that tackled the controversial subject of abortion and featured Jack Nicholson in a small role. A hired-gun director during much of the 1960's, Rush made memorable films in a variety of genres, but hit his stride with HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS (1967), a biker film that reunited him with Nicholson, and marked his first collaboration with stunt man Chuck Bail.

Rush further refined his style on his next biker film, THE SAVAGE SEVEN (1968) and his paean to the Love Generation, PSYCH OUT (1968), collaborating closely with Bail and cinematographer Laszlo Kovacs. It was on these films that Rush and Kovacs developed what Rush first referred to as "rack focus," a visual technique that involved changing the camera focus from characters or objects in the foreground to those in the background, and vice versa.

In 1970 he made the transition to big studio films with GETTING STRAIGHT (1970) and the box office hit FREEBIE AND THE BEAN (1974), but spent the bulk of the decade struggling to make what is probably his most personal film, THE STUNT MAN, which netted the director his only Oscar nomination. (Rush would later make a lengthy documentary about the making of THE STUNT MAN for its DVD release in 2000.) It would be another 14 years until his last film, COLOR OF NIGHT, was released after a highly public battle with Cinergi Productions over the film's final cut.

SHOCK CINEMA: When did you get interested films?

Richard Rush: I was always a devotee of films. Films were terribly important to me growing up as a recreation and as a way of learning about life, you learned how to smoke and how to chase girls and all kinds of things.

When I went to college at UCLA, I had a physics major with an astronomy minor. I wanted to be the first man on the moon. By the end of the first semester I realized math was going to be too much for me. I changed my major to drama and film. I figured that science would just have to fumble along without me. (laughs)

SC: You also did some film work with the military?

Rush: I was drafted. I went into the Air Force because, as a kid, I had belonged to an Air Force reserve program. I was able to activate myself in the Air Force. Even though I'm a pilot now, I didn't learn to fly in the Air Force. I was doing films there — training films and documentaries.

SC: When did you start flying?

Rush: When I got out! I took flying lessons, and I've been flying ever since.

SC: You eventually had a commercial production company. How long was it before you got that started?

Rush: Probably another five years. I had become a PR man for an advertising agency. When I slipped from the agency I opened up a production company and made films for a lot of their clients. Then I eventually raised enough money to produce the script I had written on my own, and sold out of the company and made the movie. I made the movie for $50,000. It was a low budget, black-and white wonder, and we sold it to Columbia for $250,000, so the financiers were very happy. From that point on, I could make my living making movies.

SC: How did you come up with the financing for TOO SOON TO LOVE?

Rush: I met an independent financier, a guy named Mark [Marcus] Lipsky who owned Reddi-wip.

SC: How did you get the idea for the film?

Rush: Abortion was a big issue, and that was the subject of the film. A teenage love story about abortion seemed like a hell of a good idea for a teenage exploitation picture — using the words "teenage exploitation" in the best sense of the phrase, meaning it would appeal to a younger audience.

SC: Columbia bought the film. They had no issue with the subject matter?

Rush: No, because the subject matter was handled within the kid glove values of the industry at that point. The subject was more topical and racy, the treatment wasn't.

SC: How did you meet Jack Nicholson?

Rush: I was casting. I put out a casting call and he was one of the kids that showed up. I knew immediately that he was terrific. He already had a lot of training at the studios. He played only a small part in the picture. It was already cast with both leads. He played a villain at a drive-in theater, but I got to make up for that later on by casting him as the lead in HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS.

SC: Once Columbia bought the film, what were your plans for a next project?

Rush: I had no idea, except maybe to write another script and see if I could get the financing. Also, I picked up an agent out of that adventure, and he started coming to me with projects. I slowly became what I think was a big fish in that tiny pond. *"If you've got $100,000, get Rush on the picture; if you've got more, get somebody else."*

SC: Your next credit as director was OF LOVE AND DESIRE (1963), which was shot in Mexico.

Rush: Yes. We shot it in Mexico. It was a star vehicle for Merle Oberon, and I brought in the screenwriter who I had done TOO SOON TO LOVE with, who was a failed Hungarian novelist Laszlo Gorog, a very intelligent man.

It was a strange compulsion in OF LOVE AND DESIRE. I seemed to want to get out of my system the idea of doing the big Old Hollywood Movie. Of course, I was shooting it in the style I had learned, which is a much more guerilla style of shooting, and that made lower production costs possible.

SC: Was the film financed by 20th Century Fox?

Rush: No, it was financed by Merle Oberon and her producer at that time, a guy named Victor Stoloff. She had a house in Mexico where we headquartered while writing it, and then we went to Paris. We finished the screenplay there. It

became a very international picture in that sense We cast it in Rome and Paris and L A , and finally shot it in Mexico.

SC: What was that experience like for you, having previously only done low-budget and commercial films?
Rush: It was a great adventure. I was kind of learning about the world, and learning about places outside of the United States It was a great, eye opening experience

When it gets down to the work, it's still scene-by-scene, frame by frame, to get your vision of the moment on to the film It's always strongly resistant to that I was very happy in what I was getting The picture worked out fine.

The end of the picture was very enlightening. 20th Century Fox said, *"We'll give you a half a million for it as it is, or a million for it if you can get the seal of approval"* What was the name of the Catholic seal of approval?

Sue Ane Langdon and Paul Mantee in A MAN CALLED DAGGER

SC: Are you talking about the Legion of Decency?
Rush: Yes, that seal of approval. That made it absolutely mandatory to get the seal of approval. I learned that in order to get it, you had to hire a man who was an editor who could guide you through what was necessary in terms of editing the picture to get the seal of approval. As it turned out, you had to write him a check for somewhere between $25,000 and $100,000, depending on the picture and your negotiating ability. He turned out to be the man that created the Legion of Decency seal of approval, wrote the rules for it, and privately went into business charging $25,000 to $100,000 per picture to get it. I stood in the middle of Hollywood Boulevard and handed him a check for $25,000, realizing that I now understood the way of the world. (laughs)

SC: Compared to other low-budget producers and directors, you were pretty lucky in that you actually made some money.
Rush: Yes All of my pictures made money. Not a lot, but all of them made money, and some of them made a lot. That didn't necessarily find its way into my pocket My salary for doing a picture at that time was $5,000. It took a long time and a lot of dedication, but it was certainly a nice way of making a living.

SC: A few years went by before you made A MAN CALLED DAGGER (1967).
Rush Right. I think I had also done something called THE FICKLE FINGER OF FATE [El Dedo Del Destino] (1967)

SC: I wasn't sure when that was made. That was a Spanish film.
Rush. We shot it in Spain, and it's the only picture that I let go when I was finished shooting I didn't stay and cut the picture, because it was being cut in Europe and it had a very strong producer [Sidney Pink] who really didn't want directors hanging around. So I had less of a sense of possession of that film than any of the others.

SC: How did you get involved in that project?
Rush: Through my agent. It was a kid at [International Creative Management] named Jack Gilardi. We were both young at the time. A MAN CALLED DAGGER was kind of fun because we ended up selling it to MGM, and it was my first real involvement with a studio.

SC: How did Sidney Pink compare with Sam Arkoff and Joe Solomon?
Rush. He was a smaller version of them He was okay When we got to Spain, it turned out that he was doing three pictures at the same time. The other two directors, particularly the one who I came in contact with, had an entourage of people around them. I remember at the dailies he was followed by crowds who were all attending to him and taking notes and doing his bidding

I was totally isolated. I've never been so alone in my life in doing that picture I'd stagger to my room at night and wake up the next morning, having vanished for hours. That taught me a lesson, too I never subsequently did a picture without a beautiful personal assistant at my side. (laughs)

SC: I've never seen FICKLE FINGER OF FATE. What did you think of it once it was finished?
Rush FICKLE FINGER OF FATE, as I said, was one that I tended to disassociate with because I had to leave it. I wasn't in on post production. I left it to Sidney to finish in Italy, which is a puzzlement I think at least a third of making the film is post production. There's writing it, shooting and cutting it. It's three separate films. Each demands a certain amount of creative input. Mine was not in the post production I think the film came out pretty much as intended. It was slick, a lightweight comedy. It had some funny ideas or effects in it, but aside from the title, which I put on it, it's not one of my favorites

A MAN CALLED DAGGER was the first time I used Laszlo Kovacs as my cameraman. I had to pick a new cameraman. He was a young kid who had just come over from Hungary. He was his own camera operator He was a good hand-held cameraman. I tried him, and with him came his crew. He and that crew became my crew for almost all the rest of the movies

SC: Did you cast A MAN CALLED DAGGER?
Rush. Yes. James Bond had just become big stuff, and we wanted to do a James Bond spoof. The problem is that James Bond is a spoof of detective stories, so you're doing a spoof of a spoof, but it means one step funnier. Anyway, it worked out very well. The picture was a hit for MGM. It had a lot of good scenes and a complex plot about cannibalism.

SC: That was somewhat unusual for the time.
Rush: Yes. It also gave me a chance to develop and hone that crew into a working machine. I was happy with it. I must have done THUNDER ALLEY (1967) before that, because otherwise I would have used Laszlo Kovacs on it.

SC: THUNDER ALLEY was an AIP film.
Rush: Sam Arkoff took me aside and said, *"Look, [Jim] Nicholson has got this girlfriend, and I don't want her on the picture."* I said that was okay A while later, Nicholson pulled me aside and said, *"Richard, there's this girl I'd like you to use on the picture..."*

SC: That could have been Susan Hart.
Rush: I don't know Frankly, I don't remember whether I used her or not!

SC: You did work with Diane McBain and Annette Funicello on that film.
Rush Annette Funicello was my agent's [Jack Gilardi's] wife. She was a minor star in her own right at that point because of "The Mickey Mouse Club" and her meteoric rise from it.

SC: AIP was transitioning from beach party films to hot rod films at that time. What do you remember about working with Funicello and Fabian?
Rush: Fabian turned out to be much better than my expectations I had that jaundiced view of, "Oh, it's Fabian - a manufactured talent" But he wasn't like that, he was a smart kid, worked hard, and was willing to do whatever you asked him to. Annette had poise and great ability, and was a mini movie star.

I had a particular problem with that film It had a producer on it who had shot a lot of auto footage during the season

SC: Burt Topper.
Rush: Yes. So in a sense he had pre-manufactured a good part of the film, the action part of the film. The part of the film that deals with the actors is mine, and the rest is Burt's. It sort of divorced me from that sense of proprietorship that I have over all of my other films.

SC: You went on to HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS after those three films.
Rush. Right, and that's what I figured was my best and most important picture up to that point, and the one where I could apply everything I had learned about making movies By that time, I had

figured out how to make movies, or I figured it out on that movie

SC: Did that come through your agent?
Rush: Yes He brought a man named Joe Solomon to me, who said, *"I've got a hundred thousand dollars and the real Hells Angels. You wanna make a movie?"* And at first I didn't There had been one picture made with a motorcycle club, and they ended up pissing on the equipment and beating up the actors. It didn't seem like a comfortable enterprise.

SC: That was Roger Corman's THE WILD ANGELS. Peter Bogdanovich got punched by a biker on that film.
Rush: That was probably the picture in question Anyway, I did a lot of research on the Hells Angels and learned a lot about their culture, mostly from the Hunter S. Thompson book, and decided to make it.

I did a rewrite on the script; I wasn't crazy about the screenplay I had when I started the movie. Because of that, I didn't feel my normal sense of loyalty to the writer's material I felt that we were free to go where we had to go It kept going into spontaneous rewrites as we went. At one point a cheer came up from the crew, because after three days I had worked my way back to the script. We weren't *totally* lost!

SC: A lot of the crews that worked on these low-budget films were used to more workman-like directors who had come out of television or the studios. How did the crews respond to your looser approach to production?
Rush: I can't compare it to the way they responded to other directors, because directors really don't know other directors They have no reason to get together. They are competitors and they don't work together I was working at this point with what I considered my crew, and they were loyal and faithful to the end. If we were running out of money, fine, they would finish the picture free. I would expect them to, and they would expect to We were all making a movie and that was paramount.

SC: You worked with the Hells Angels and Sonny Barger on that film. What was that like?
Rush Well, I learned that the Hells Angels is a fascist organization, and in a fascist organization, if you've got the leader you've got the rest of the crew There wasn't a moment of difficulty with them, because we did have Sonny. He basically was pleased to be involved with this, had made a deal with us, and was keeping his word.

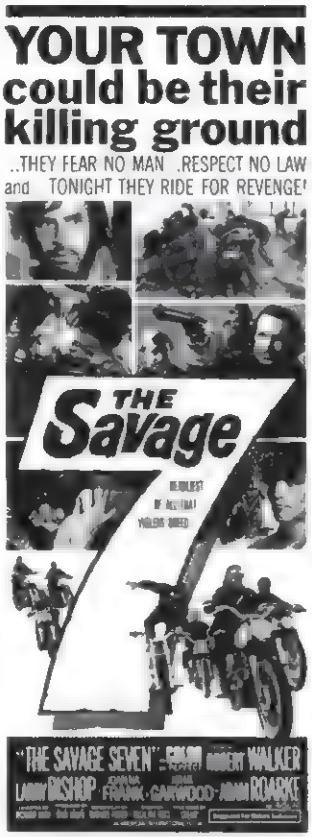
Later I did the picture I *really* wanted to do, which was about Haight-Ashbury. It was retitled PSYCH-OUT. It was about that new culture in America, the hippie culture, which was a terribly exciting cultural phenomenon. But when we hit the streets of Haight Ashbury with our trucks and the emblems on the side, the people there said, *"They've come to exploit us. These are the bad guys."* We were having trouble with the people on the street. They pulled knives on some of the actors and things like that. There was no way I could call the police for protection, because that would immediately alienate us from the street people So I called up Sonny and got the Angels to come in and police it for us

I felt like I just called up the Nazis to protect us from the French Underground! But it worked out. The incidents went away because what the street people of Haight-Ashbury and the Angels had in common was dope. They bonded immediately.

SC: How did you find Adam Roarke? You used him on a number of films.
Rush: HELLS ANGELS was the first one I found him in an open casting session. I understand he had been kept waiting a long time. I'm slow at readings, so the actors end up waiting a long time. The second I read him I knew he was the guy, and my assistant Sheila was taking notes after each reading for me. She knew how high I was on him Later on he was waiting in the office to see if there was going to be a callback or not. He wanted to leave. She said, *"Don't leave I think you're gonna get it."*

SC: This went on to be a big hit for Joe Solomon. He built his whole company on the success of the film.
Rush: I think it was a hit because it was really a good movie. It was ambitious. I decided to use the Hells Angels as kind of trash on the landscape, filming beautiful green pictorials with the Hells Angels being a disruptive kind of ugly smear on the landscape. It's a little Faustian It was a very easy parallel for Jack Nicholson to be Faust and Adam Roarke to be Mephistopheles, with lines like, "Better to rule in hell than serve in heaven."

SC: You first met Chuck Bail on this film. When I talked to him, he told me that you had different ideas about how to cover a bar fight.
Rush: Yes. Chuck had been working in the major studios for many years, and figured there was one way to do it. You shoot a master, then go in for the close-ups I figured I would do it the way I learned how to do it. I'm gonna use maybe three seconds of the master if I run out of material, so we go in and we shoot the pieces we need for the fight to cut together to make the fight. Usually it's not just a close-up and a close up; it's a move into a close-up that results in something That's movie shooting as opposed to TV shooting. So Chuck was very uncomfortable about not getting master coverage on everything.



SC: He worked on THE SAVAGE SEVEN for you, too.
Rush. I was absolutely taken with Chuck. The argument about how to shoot the fight was totally beside the point. He showed me what a great stuntman does.

He trained me afterward as a stunt gaffer. He said in the documentary I did recently about the making of THE STUNT MAN that, *"Richard Rush doesn't really need a stunt gaffer; it's just a convenience He really doesn't need one"* I came in and said, 'Chuck, you're absolutely right, because I had the greatest teacher in the world — Chuck Bail."

SC: You shot THE SAVAGE SEVEN before PSYCH-OUT.
Rush: That was the obligation picture. I turned out to like it quite a bit though I was shocked recently when I got word from one of Quentin Tarantino's disciples that that was his favorite picture, and the reason he started making movies. I thought, "What? SAVAGE SEVEN?" I went home to look at it to see what it was that captivated him. I hadn't seen it in years.

It turned out that it wasn't what I expected. SAVAGE SEVEN has the first rack focus love scene, completely done in critical focus And it worked like a charm. I was just crazy about it. I thought that must be what it was. As it turned out, I heard it had to do with the characters, with the villain, who alternates between white hat and black hat. The character keeps changing He liked the ambivalence of the villain.

SC: Tell me about the development of that critical focus technique, and your work with Laszlo Kovacs.
Rush: I had gotten a camera as a birthday present. I spent the summer around the pool experimenting with it. It had a ten-to-one zoom lens on it.

I found you could get some very interesting effects I'd never seen before at the high end of the ten-to-one zoom. By changing focus you could move from one object to another, where one would become invisible and the other suddenly appear. I showed them to Laszlo and asked if he felt we could do the same thing on 35mm. We decided to make some tests before the next film, which was THE SAVAGE SEVEN. We did

Adam Roarke in HELLS ANGELS ON WHEELS

some tests and it seemed to work, and we used it for the first time on that movie.

For me it developed into a whole system of shooting movies, where you block the scenes to accommodate the critical focus of the lenses. It's complex to set up material that way. There's something much more poetic about the transition from one object to another, rather than a cut or a dissolve.

SC: Was it difficult to do that kind of blocking, given the limited schedules you were on with those two films?

Rush: It always is. On low-budget movies or high-budget movies, that's a challenge whether you really have time to do what you want because you are following a schedule. It takes longer to set up the shots in critical focus; however, you eat up a lot in one shot. In other words, what might take 20 or 30 shots to cover, you do in one, or *can* do in one. I brought it to that level on GETTING STRAIGHT, but I didn't have a chance to go that far on the other films.

SC: How did the filming of SAVAGE SEVEN go?

Rush: We treated it very ambitiously. Chuck Bail was responsible for a lot of it, because he taught me, among many other things, that empty cardboard boxes were a serviceable substitute for mattresses to dive into off the tops of buildings. We used an enormous quantity of cardboard boxes under buildings.

We were really staging a war. From the beginning, we had a brilliant set designer [Leon Ericksen], a kid who was very much part of the hippie movement, and very much part of the dope scene. He went off into the desert and found old shacks and had tractors drag them back to form our Indian village. I later lent him to Robert Altman for the film that became the big series, M*A*S*H. He became his regular designer, and I lent my whole crew to him for M*A*S*H, including my production manager. The set designer became his partner later in other pictures.

That picture actually is the only one where I ran out of time by the end of the picture. They wouldn't extend me an hour to finish the movie. In a sense it ended up the way I wanted it to end, which was inspired by (again, presumptuously) THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, looking out on the vast chaos and saying, "Madness, madness." But we left it with the war still raging and the city burning. Perhaps I would have liked to have finished with a conclusive vignette between the principals, but instead it was that kind of open, anxious ending. It works, but not quite as well as I wanted it to.

SC: Why were you so keen to do PSYCH-OUT?

Rush: Because I was fascinated with this revolutionary new cultural thing that happened, the new movement with a new kind of hero, a guy who says, "Love, not war." That was the hero of the culture, and the nature of the movement. It had worth and captivated so many hearts and souls. That was until, during the second winter, it got cold on the street and no one was able to sustain themselves. But it certainly was a revolutionary set of ideas.

SC: How did you feel about the political and cultural movements going on at the time? You were a bit older than most of the hippies, and your films always seemed a little bit dubious of the counterculture.

Rush: I felt very strongly about the hippie movement and was very attracted to it, although by the time I got to do a movie about it it had turned into more of a slightly self-defeating dope culture. Then I felt very strongly and affirmatively about the student movement, which dissolved into the kids on the barricades fighting against the war. That was what I could really sink my teeth into on GETTING STRAIGHT.

Jack Nicholson, Susan Strasberg and Dean Stockwell in PSYCH-OUT

SC: How involved was PSYCH-OUT's producer, Dick Clark? Did you interact much with him?

Rush: A fair amount. More than I wanted to! He, of course, was strongly in control of the music on the picture, at least until the final dub when I switched it around, as one is expected to do. There were a couple of conflicts. I had to use a song — I can't remember the name of it now, but it was a kind of a nursery rhyme, downbeat lyric that didn't fit in the picture. Then I stuck it in a scene where it played against the material, and it actually worked quite well, but that was a save by diving off the grandstand.

Later on, there was a phenomena in Hollywood that nobody usually talks about, but if you do a great scene in the movie, that's the one they're gonna want to cut. It never fails. It's because it attracts their attention. They say, *"That scene caught my eye. Let's get rid of it."* That was the scene they went over, and Dick was backing them. This was the bead sequence. But fortunately, I screamed loud enough and won the fight. Otherwise he was quite fun, except for a couple of conflicts like that.

SC: Your first studio film was GETTING STRAIGHT for Columbia. What was that experience like?

Rush: We pulled off a terrific coup with them. When they agreed I would do that picture and made the deal, I said to them (since I produced both my pictures as well), "Why don't you let me produce this? I'm fiscally very responsible." I said the right words and they let me do it. Then, I told them that, "Obviously you want me to work for you because you like the stuff I do, and you like the prices I do it at. I would like to be able to do that for you. I'd like to work with my own crew, which is a non union crew. Why don't we try to bring them into the union?"

There was a guy there who was head of business affairs, who was tired of arguing with IATSE, and was kind of a sporting gentleman. He said, *"Why the hell not? We'll do it!"* And we did. After an ingenious and big battle, we managed to bring my entire crew into the IA. I had my whole team come in on GETTING STRAIGHT.

SC: Having made primarily independent productions, was it difficult to get your bearings in the studio environment?

Rush: It was difficult, and the truth of the matter is I don't think I ever did catch on. (laughs) I was always considered by all the studios as a sort of troublesome character who didn't work within the system. The system being that they have screenplays, and they want them modified and filmed a certain way. I, of course, want to do them my way. That continued to plague me. It was worth it in the long run, because I liked the way the pictures came out.

"Warren's freaking out at the gallery."

SC: When the guys who made EASY RIDER were preparing for that film, didn't they show some of your biker films as part of the pitch to the studio?

Rush: The producer was the son of the head of Columbia, Bert Schneider. He came to me and said, *"If you have prints of those three pictures, I'd like to show them to my dad because we're gonna do a motorcycle picture, and we're gonna use the same people you use. They are sort of modeled after what you did."*

They invited me to the screening. I was both flattered and jealous at the results. Not so much of the movie, but of the box office. Finally, an independent motorcycle picture got the promotion of a studio behind it. And a great slogan, written by Jack Nicholson: "A man went looking for America, and couldn't find it anywhere."

SC: GETTING STRAIGHT actually opened the week of the Kent State University shootings.

Rush: Yes, it did. That was an unfortunate coincidence, because it wasn't the best time to do a comedy about student rebellion that week. There was some hostility in the New York press because of that. I got into a pissing contest with the guy who wrote for *The New York Times*, because they

offered a rebuttal to his review, and he attacked us, so I attacked him. I learned that you don't do that with journalists!

SC: I have an interview with you from when you were promoting THE STUNT MAN where you mentioned Kent State as the point the progressive movement of the sixties really fractured.

Rush: Right. Actually, it was ecology that was born out of the Kent State shootings It's like the rebels went off to find safer targets. They can't shoot you for sweeping up the teepee. I was resistant because it seemed emasculating to the movement; they turned into house cleaners But I have since learned that it's a worthwhile cause as the planet disintegrates beneath us.

SC: Will FREEBIE AND THE BEAN ever come out on DVD?

Rush: I have no idea. It seems absurd if it doesn't, because as I've said before it's a bulletproof picture There is no audience it doesn't work for.

I had a chance to prove that when I was invited to the Playboy Mansion where they were running a preview of FREEBIE AND THE BEAN as their entertainment for the night. As I walked in, John Milius came up to me and said, *"What the hell are you doing here? Are you crazy? You don't want to show your movie in this venue. These people all have weak bladders and weak minds."* I said it didn't matter Anybody, any time, any venue, this picture is bulletproof. And, of course, it was a big hit.

SC: What did Alan Arkin and James Caan think of the film? I've heard there were conflicts with them during production.

Rush: I think of myself as an actor's director, and that's more or less undisputed with the people I've worked with. In other words, performance is favored over everything. The rest of the picture can go down the drain as long as the performance works

I've never had a conflict with an actor, so I was totally unprepared for it I had been warned by the only great executive I have ever met, the guy who was running Warner Brothers at the time, John Calley I told him I wanted Arkin for it, and he said, *"No, you don't He's a director killer. He goes into extreme conflicts with any of his directors. He just nearly destroyed Mike Nichols on CATCH 22"*

It turned out that, in the beginning, Arkin and Caan were afraid of each other They were constantly worrying about and complaining about each other I figured they had to be united. Nothing unites people like a common enemy. I miscalculated and didn't expect to turn out to be the enemy, but it worked out that way. I had a very rough relationship with both of them during the picture It wasn't affecting the performances at all They would respond to direction, they would give me the takes I wanted, but I had a hard time in every other respect. Finally, after the picture, after Arkin saw the first rough cut, he came to me and apologized for the behavior on the picture, and so did Caan at some point. But it was pointless in the aftermath. Anyway, it cut together well and it turned out to be their best grosser that year

SC: In THE STUNT MAN documentary, you said that ego had replaced greed as a primary motivating force in Hollywood by the time that film came out. Can you expand on that?

Rush: Well, greed was basically reliable in the sense that you knew what to expect. If you relied on greed as a motive, you knew what your opponent was gonna do because it would be more beneficial to him in a monetary sense You knew what to expect, and you could try to anticipate and deal with it.

Then this strange phenomena happened where the studio system had been acquired by multinational corporations that had motives of their own for doing business. At the same time, the people who were gaining control were the stars, the flashy guys who would rise inside the system, get incredible deals with golden parachutes. They seemed to be rising on ego, on the amount of their salary, and the credits they could stack up, because they could take credit for things they may or may not have had anything to do with.

It seemed to be that if you had a picture for sale that they had nothing to do with, if it couldn't boost their personal value and their personal aggrandizement by claiming some sort of credit, then there was no point in getting into it. Suddenly the axioms that I had learned were no longer appropriate. By the time I did THE STUNT MAN, it was a different marketplace

SC: This was also the end of the era when directors like Francis Coppola and Martin Scorsese had been given free reign in Hollywood.

Rush: I'm wondering if that was then or just before that Remember, THE STUNT MAN came out in 1980 I think during the 1970's that was true, but then suddenly there was a big inter-studio conspiracy to take final cut away from the director. They did it with HEAVEN'S GATE There was considerable speculation that the studio was deliberately letting it go as much over budget as it could, so they could make that move From that point on, unless you had firmly established final cut and were willing to die for it on your next picture, you wouldn't get it anymore.

SC: This is the problem you ran into with COLOR OF NIGHT.

Rush: Yes. And they offered me a substitute, which was that equal-previews plan I was willing to gamble if they were.

SC: That notion of having test audiences and altering the film after the previews — that had been done before, but after the 1990's it happened constantly. Now they shoot six endings for a film.

Rush: It was a great tool for the studios to take control of the cutting of the film They could manipulate to some extent the previews, and could therefore at least have some kind of statistical, justifiable reason for changing them, maybe in the wrong direction It's a very artificial system I always heavily previewed my stuff privately I would have group screenings while we were cutting it.

I remember one scene in THE STUNT MAN, the scene of the carnage on the beach, where it became a question of running that scene and seeing how long the audience would stay You'd start to get walk outs in ten seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds, et cetera, and that actually determined the length of the scene. You must keep the audience in the house.

SC: A few critics were upset that, in that sequence in particular and in the rooftop chase, you used "movie time" even though you were supposed to be showing what happened behind the scenes on a film. They didn't think it was realistic enough, or that it was some sort of a cheat.

Rush: I worked out, at least for myself, a very interesting rebuttal to that criticism of the beach sequence. Not withstanding the fact that I'd put a blanket of smoke over the beach, during which anything could have happened underneath, the fact is that we used time cuts constantly in the film You drive up to your hotel, and the next thing your key is going in the door of your hotel room. You skip the walk through the lobby if you want to get there faster

In our case, we did some time cuts to get to those bodies in the sand, which were perfectly legitimate, but there was a very deliberate fine tuning of the cutting to make sure in my mind that the audience had a sense of having been deceived. The reason being that the theme of the movie is deception It's kind of a warning: stay on your toes because we're going to be fooling around with you. I like the idea of making

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Elliott Gould and Candice Bergen in GETTING STRAIGHT

FILM REVIEWS

THE KREMLIN LETTER (European Trash Cinema; 1970).

John Huston has directed a long list of all-time classics, but in the 1960's his reputation had dulled after duds such as THE BIBLE and SINFUL DAVEY. This complex, chilling and often-brilliant Cold War spy drama didn't help matters. Adapted from a novel by Noel Behn (and loosely based on the author's own experiences in the Army's Counterintelligence Corps), it's a surprisingly low key endeavor, with emotions played close to the vest. In other words, the antithesis of then popular James Bond fare. The final kiss of box office death? Huston cast a full roster of cool but decidedly-uncommercial faces.

The apparent suicide of an imprisoned Soviet traitor named Poliakoff has his captors in an uproar and a bevy of American spies in search of answers — as well as a potentially-explosive letter written by the US and now in Russian hands, which could incite a war with Red China. Patrick O'Neal plays Navy officer Charles Rone, who's abruptly thrust into this international spy game by grizzled cloak-and dagger veteran Ward (HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL's Richard Boone).

Rone's first task is to recruit several uniquely-skilled specialists for this job. Dean Jagger is "The Highwayman" and Nigel Green is "The Whore". In a San Francisco gay nightclub he finds "The Warlock" (George Sanders, in drag and ugly as sin); and Chicago's "Erector Set" (Niall MacGinnis) loans Rone his sexy, safe-cracking daughter (Barbara Parkins). Then it's off to Moscow via Siberia, with Rone undercover as a gigolo, in hopes of seducing Poliakoff's defection happy widow (Bibi Andersson), and hordes of Secret Police (including Max Von Sydow's ruthless Colonel Kosnov) hot on his trail.

Unfortunately, the film's casting is wildly hit-and-miss. O'Neal is out of his depth (James Coburn, who was first offered the role, would've been far more charismatic) and VALLEY OF THE DOLLS alumnus Parkins is embarrassingly flat, but Boone kicks ass as a creepy, unflinching bad-ass who's capable of *anything* — even brutally killing a defenseless woman. It's also amusing to see longtime Ingmar Bergman veterans Von Sydow and Andersson reunited for these spy shenanigans, which are a far cry from THE SEVENTH SEAL. Also look for Lila Kedrova as a Moscow Madame, Orson Welles as a Russian bigwig and Vonetta McGee as a lesbian seductress referred to as "The Negress."

The dense plot is full of misdirection and deceit; the dialogue is often dry and if you don't pay close attention, it's easy to get lost; plus if you're looking for cookie-cutter heroics, forget it! The US comes off looking as thuggish and sadistic as any Soviet spook — bugging apartments, dealing drugs, procuring women, indulging in art theft and smuggling, even kidnapping a Russian's wife and teenage daughters — while demonstrating that espionage is just a dirty, manipulative and very deadly game. Too smart and cynical for its intended audience, it's no surprise that this underrated film is still forgotten.

DOODLES LOVER DIARY (Just For the Hell Of It; 1965).

Doodles Weaver is a comic character-actor legend, and if the name isn't immediately familiar, you've definitely seen and heard his work. In the 1940's, Doodles was a member of Spike Jones' City Slickers, and he later appeared in nearly 100 films and TV-shows — often in uncredited bit parts and usually playing a rural clod — ranging from Alfred Hitchcock's THE BIRDS to guest spots on BATMAN and THE MONKEES. He was also the brother of NBC president 'Pat' Weaver and uncle to Sigourney. Unfortunately, the poor guy never had a major break in his career and, after a lifetime battle with chronic alcoholism, committed suicide in 1983 at the age of 71. Now that we're all sufficiently depressed, let's get down to this comedy compilation.

A DAY WITH DOODLES was a series of 5-minute, live-action slapstick shorts that were meant to be sold for syndicated early-morning kid's shows, with Doodles starring as himself — a witless man-child who seems like a precursor to Pee-Wee Herman. What other 54-year-old guy wears a bow-tie, short sleeve dress shirt and bermuda shorts, while peddling around on his bicycle? He also plays *all* of the other roles, including tramps, professors and women, using a variety of Rescue Mission costumes and mildewed hairpieces. The episodes have no dialogue, just a voiceover explaining the latest idiotic situation that (perpetually-mugging) Doodles has gotten himself into.

This disc contains 18 of these color shorts, with the plot usually centered around a new job (gas station, bakery, caddy) or a creaky moral lesson gone awry ("Love Thy Neighbor"). It isn't long before a pattern emerges — everything this simpleton touches turns to shit. He ruins a neighbor's BBQ; is incapable of flying a kite or surfing; creates chaos at his new library job; even running a lemonade stand is too big of an intellectual challenge. Considering this goofus' track record, when Doodles adopts a dog, it's hard not to fear for the poor pooch's safety. Two exceptions to this 'formula' stand out. First, when Doodles inadvertently wins a track meet and (for one shining moment) ends up a hero; and the only short with any cultural subtext is "Doodles Plays Soldier," in which he dons military garb in order to disrupt the work of a long haired artist.

Each short looks like it cost a buck-fifty to produce, and although none of this tired schtick is even remotely funny, its no-budget desperation becomes strangely hypnotic after awhile, particularly when Doodles is playing three, four or more roles in some scenes. Always impossibly upbeat, despite his utter failure at even the simplest, most menial tasks, A DAY WITH DOODLES boasts the pure, unchained id of a slow-witted six year-old. The disc also includes a b&w episode of his 1951 summer replacement series THE DOODLES WEAVER SHOW, a stagebound variety comedy whose biggest laughs come from its heavyhanded sponsorship by the "Florida Citrus Industry."

DAD... CAN I BORROW THE CAR? (All Clues No Solutions; 1970).

Hard to believe, long before Walt Disney Studios sold its creative soul at the alter of commercialization with insipid tween-pop music, $100-a-seat Broadway shows and shitty direct-to-DVD sequels' to its greatest animated hits, a one-of-a-kind oddity managed to sneak out. A prime example of Disney's artists running amok is this tripped out ode to America's infatuation with the automobile, first telecast as an hour long episode of THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DISNEY. In the hands of two of Disney's top talents — director Ward Kimball was one of the original "Nine Old Men," who worked on classics such as PINOCCHIO, FANTASIA and SNOW WHITE; writer Ted Berman helped animate flicks like PETER PAN, and later co-directed THE BLACK CAULDRON — this throwaway project was transformed into pop culture art that mixes live-action, animated snippets, experimental techniques, and whirlwind pacing.

Narrated by 19-year-old Disney-contract-player Kurt Russell (in between his starring gigs in THE BAREFOOT EXECUTIVE and THE COMPUTER WORE TENNIS SHOES), it follows an average Los Angeles teenager who admits he was "hooked on cars" and "turned on by wheels" from birth. He also shows us how the love of autos is an inherent part of childhood — from preschool kids playing with toy cars, to slot cars, soap box races, go karts, mini-bikes, all the way to our kid's first visit to the DMV (with Kurt chiming in, "Man, it's a pretty freaky place," to demonstrate that his character is really 'with it'). After grumbling about having to wait in line (gosh, *three* whole people are ahead of him), dealing with grumpy grown-ups and battling nerves during his driver's test, his vehicular success ultimately leads to the program's title...

With its intricate cutting and fast paced camerawork, this free-wheeling enterprise often feels like some '60s avant-garde short: there's a stop motion "easy to assemble" model-car sequence; a convertible's groovy ride through a car wash is shot like a scene from THE TRIP; two animated racing stripes compete to cover a car; and talking used-autos look like precursors to Pixar's CARS. Plus there's a high-school Driver's-Ed simulator that's like nothing *I've* ever seen — with a student behind the wheel of a fake dashboard and

responding to a 16mm film, to see how he'd deal with passing Hell's Angels, a bank robbery or a roadside teeny bikini There's also footage of dune buggies, dragsters, demolition derbies, a custom car "fashion show" with leggy models and real-life Hot Wheels, plus an outlandish car-decorating contest held at Disneyland. It's great fun, even if you aren't a car enthusiast

RAZZIA SUR LA CHNOUF (notavailableondvd.com; 1955).

Based on a book by Auguste Le Breton (RIFIFI, BOB LE FLAMBEUR), this French gangsters-'n'-drugs drama was the first in a string of Breton-adaptations starring the great Jean Gabin. Like a Gallic Bogart he looked beaten about the edges, acted tough as rawhide and definitely knew how to work a trenchcoat. Although the film's opening disclaimer seems over-the-top nowadays ("a warning to those who, due to weakness might, one day, be the victims of that terrifying plague DRUGS"), the movie itself is a noir knockout that's as enjoyably ruthless as any US crime classic from that era.

Gabin stars as mobster Henri Ferre, an old pro from the Western Nantes region, who's summoned to Paris to help run the mob's heroin operation. With the local police closely watching his shady activities, Henri is set up with a posh restaurant cover and quickly gets a full tour of his complex criminal enterprise — meeting the bosses, their chemist, the pushers, local gamblers, and he even visits an 'opium den" hidden in the back of a trendy antiques store We also see how blocks of unrefined opium from the Balkans are smuggled in via train, and that if anyone gets cold feet and wants to quit the biz, they're unceremoniously eliminated.

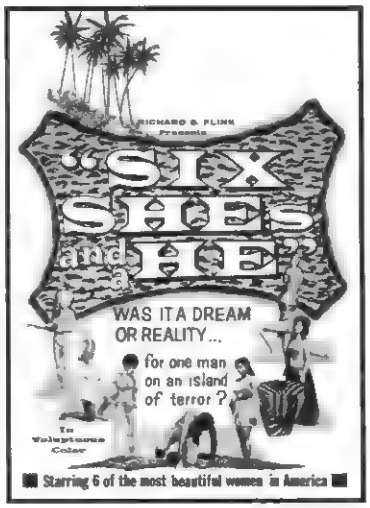
Gabin is an expert at slapping around underlings, while the dirtiest work is done by his two merciless enforcers (Albert Remy and Lino Ventura, who makes Gabin look downright mild mannered). But underneath that hard-boiled veneer, Henri is still susceptible to a young woman's wiles — such as 22 year old Magali Noel (AMARCORD) as Lisette, the alluring restaurant cashier who succumbs to Henri's grizzled charms. Meanwhile, the cops are closing in, a rat could be in their midst, these scumballs are all scrambling to survive, along with a final assault on Henri and his heavily-armed men

The supporting cast includes Lila Kedrova as a flamboyant junkie who (in the movie's craziest sequence) hauls Henri to an African gay bar full of stoned men and a shirtless, muscular dancer as the floor show Plus Gabin's GRANDE ILLUSION co-star, Marcel Dalio, turns up as Henri's big boss, Liski. Director Henri Decoin keeps it slick and tense, but not without the occasional bit of sly humor (such as when Henri's restaurant is raided by cops and everyone gets hauled in — later, his staff is seen sweeping up enough dumped weapons to arm a small militia), along with atmospheric black-and-white cinematography by Pierre Montazel and a jazzy score by acclaimed French composer Marc Lanjean.

LOVE GODDESSES OF BLOOD ISLAND [a.k.a. Six Shes and a He] (Something Weird Video; 1964).

The battle of the sexes wages on in this bliss fully asinine no budget lark, which delivers wall-to-wall tease and some unexpected sleaze. Considered a lost film for several decades, this (obviously) incomplete print only runs 48 minutes, but that's more than enough time to destroy millions of healthy brain cells with its inept charms

When his B-26 on route to Okinawa develops engine trouble, macho pilot Fred Rogers (Bill Rogers, from H.G. Lewis' A TASTE OF BLOOD) lands in the drink, washes up on a remote island and is promptly enslaved by its half-dozen female inhabitants These Amazons tend to dance about in their skimpy mini-togas and take badly choreographed, bikini-clad dips in the nearby wading pool, while 100% All Man Fred does their bidding. When his job involves smootchin' with Queen Aphrodite (Luana Hodges), it's no problem, but pulling a plow is another matter entirely. Each night, Fred is then passed around to a different goddess — Valkarie, Pandora, Desiree — alas, the poor guy is too exhausted from toiling in the fields to satisfy all of these randy gals



But suddenly, a half-hour into this loopy lark, director Gordon H Heaver (a.k.a Richard S. Flink) shifts gears, with a flashback to the ultra graphic *beheading* and *dismemberment* of the ladies' previous male captive Yow! Even better, when French dish Desiree (Dawn Meridith) helps Fred escape, it leads to some of the flick's craziest moments, including a protracted, bloody catfight and an eyeball full of machete.

Best of all, there's no effort made to cover up its dime-store limitations The opening crash is heard over an intercom and all we see is the pilot floating in a teeny, inflatable life-raft, the cast consists of only seven people; and at every feast, they've got the same roast pig on a spit, but never actually carve into the damned thing. The female cast isn't close to being "6 of the most beautiful women in America" (though they sure have big, impressive perms for living on a deserted island), and their godawful "Love Goddess" song 'n' dance resembles something you'd see at a 4th-rate Reno lounge in the '60s The gore is crude and unbelievable, but that only adds to its kitsch appeal. Plus continuity must've been a low priority, since the story is initially set during WWII, with these dames escaping the world's 'madness' — but later, a newspaper headline calls Fred an *astronaut* Hey, nobody in the audience will notice, right? More likely, Flink simply didn't give a damn.

A SMALL TOWN IN TEXAS (Shocking Videos; 1976).

In the mid-'70s, American International Pictures — long-beloved for their drive in exploitation — tried to go upscale with established stars, bigger budgets and releases like the Liza Minnelli stinker A MATTER OF TIME It was a bad idea, and this watered-down, strictly PG redneck drama could've been another casualty if not for its pairing of Texas-born director Jack Starrett (RACE WITH THE DEVIL) and scriptwriter William Norton (BIG BAD MAMA), who both knew their shit when it came to crafting an entertaining B movie. It's a bit tame and formulaic, but there are plenty of rural charms along the way.

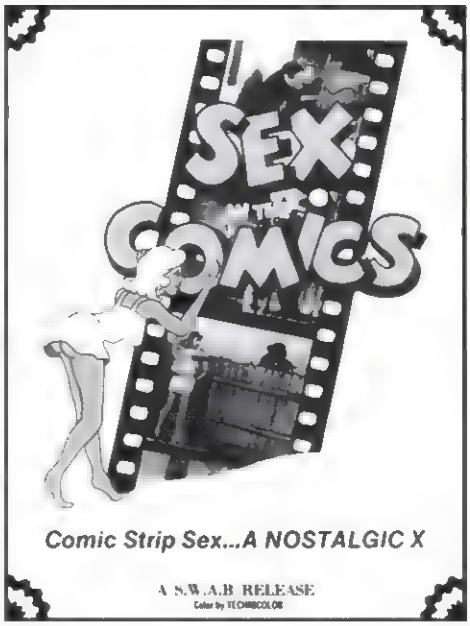
Just released from prison, after a 5 year stint for possession of grass, Poke Jackson (Timothy Bottoms) returns to his Texas hometown, and while most of the locals are psyched at this good-ol'-boy football-hero's return, one lawman is less than enthusiastic. Bo Hopkins co stars as Sheriff Duke, who's responsible for Poke's jail time, and is nowadays screwing his old girlfriend Mary Lee (Susan George) and playing surrogate father to Poke's young son.

The film's first-half is laid-back and thick with local atmosphere — as well as rekindled romance between Poke and Mary Lee — but the story shifts gears midway when Poke witnesses a local political candidate's assassination, which was masterminded by the corrupt Sheriff. After Poke steals the killer's $25 G's, he plans to skip town with Mary Lee and his kid, but the law is in hot pursuit, with Poke (and his capable stunt double) taking these cops on a high-speed, cross-county motorbike chase.

Bottoms kicked off his film career with critical-faves like THE LAST PICTURE SHOW and THE PAPER CHASE, and while the guy is charming enough, he isn't the most believable action hero. George is appropriately trashy (then again, when *wasn't* she?), while cocky Hopkins finally unleashes his inner-psychopath in the second half — beating up suspects, threatening Mary Lee and stealing every scene The colorful supporting cast includes Art Hindle as Poke's pal Boogie, John Karlen plays a deputy, George "Buck" Flower is a helpful redneck, COOL HAND LUKE's Morgan Woodward pops up as top politician C.J. Crane, and Starrett (as Claude Ennis Starrett, Jr) even gave himself a showy cameo as a trigger-happy drunk. With cinematography by Robert Jessup (SUGAR HILL, THE BIG BRAWL and a slew of Larry Buchanan flicks), this lightweight effort is buoyed by good performances and an authentic aura, but would've benefited from an extra shot of adrenaline

SEX IN THE COMICS (Just For the Hell Of It; 1973).

Utterly ridiculous and unfathomably misguided, this no-budget, live-action tribute to Tijuana Bibles — raunchy, 8-page comics that pre-dated porn mags and kept young men hard with their forbidden funnies — boasts one of the least erotic, "what-the-fuck-were-they-thinking?" high-concepts for an X-rated feature. Instead of using actual sets, the filmmakers simply painted furniture, fake windows or trees onto theatre flats, while the men wear masks with large, googly eyes and lumpy, penis-like noses, in order to look like cartoon-characters. Thankfully, the women avoid these masks (or many clothes once the humping kicks in).



Prim magazine writer Della Fields gets plenty of bang for her buck when she visits the studio of cartoonist Drake Johnson, to research an article on his beloved creation, Pinky the Cat. He instead decides to tell this young woman all about the lurid, post-WWI history of the "eight-pagers" and a "fictitious" young artist who once made ends meet in this sexually-graphic field. It then segues into a variety of raunchy vignettes based on these infamous dirty digests. Each episode only lasts two to four minutes and, after its softcore sex scene (which occasionally freeze-frames, as if to resemble a comic panel), concludes with a hoary, humorous twist. For example, a blind-drunk husband is unaware that his wife is in bed with another man.

Most of them are parodies of popular, clean-cut comic characters (with their names ever-so-slightly changed). Country clod "Barney Guggle" visits the big city and bangs a fake Countess; "Dogwood" is seduced by a door-to-door contraception saleswoman; "Betty Boob" (who isn't nearly as sexy as Fleischer's animated creation) comes onto a muscular lifeguard at the beach; detective "Richard Lacy" ("Call me Dick") investigates a cheating wife and her lesbian lover, and later fucks a criminal temptress; plus many more. All the while, we keep cutting back to Johnson's office, with our female journalist increasingly aroused by his anecdotes and slowly stripping off her clothes.

Oddly enough, no one involved was willing to take credit for this 70-minute film, and instead used pseudonyms such as director "Eric Von Letch", writers "Paul Pervertt" and "Miles Muff", lead actors "Lance Hardon" and "Clara Clitt", and cinematographer "Boris Kutchacockoff". The women (who play multiple roles) are abysmal in the acting department, and their bodies are often even worse, while the guys get off easier because they can't be identified (although a colleague swears that one of the male performers is Duke Mitchell!). This definitely isn't sexy, and I'd be hard pressed to label it a comedy, since I didn't laugh once; but I was utterly stunned throughout.

TEST PILOT PIRX [Test Pilota Pirxa] (European Trash Cinema; 1979).

Based on a series of "Pirx the Pilot" stories (particularly "The Inquest") from science-fiction author Stanilaw Lem (SOLARIS), this colorful, thought-provoking Polish feature stays true to Lem's original themes about human robot dynamics. Closer to Isaac Asimov territory than BLADE RUNNER (which wouldn't be released for three more years), writer-director Marek Piestrak wisely tosses in just enough space-age excitement to keep audiences from nodding off during its occasional philosophical discourse.

In the far-flung future, society still hasn't gotten used to cybernetic humanoids, even though these indistinguishable "non-linears" are *better* than flesh-and-blood beings at certain jobs — such as space travel, since they have faster reflexes and no need for oxygen, food or sleep. Enter pigheaded Commander Pirx (Sergei Desnitsky), who's been recruited to head up the first flight to Saturn containing both human and robot-prototype crewmembers. Our title pilot has nothing but contempt for these man-made creations, but his task is to honestly evaluate the mission's success, without any knowledge of which crewmen are or aren't human.

Meanwhile, powerful cybernetic corporations will go to any lengths to block the possibility of negative input, even if it means murdering Pirx. He and his five 'man' crew eventually blast off in their dimly-lit ship, with plans to dump a couple probes dangerously-near Saturn's rings. Throughout the trip, paranoid Pirx becomes increasingly suspicious of certain individuals, while the mission itself involves asteroid clusters, a near-disaster in space and a tribunal that puts the ship's "non-linear" on trial for his actions.

Although it gets a bit preachy whenever the script pleads its pro-robot case, this is nowhere near as slow and cerebral as Tarkovsky's 1972 adaptation of SOLARIS (or monotonously self-important, like the 2002 Clooney misfire). The Soviet-outsourced special effects are mediocre (then again, at that time even Disney was cranking out FX-duds like THE BLACK HOLE), plus it's always amusing to encounter visions of the "future" which are so wrongheaded. For example, although scientists have managed to create superhuman cyborgs, people still use big, corded phones; all computers and spacecraft control panels have blinky, colored lights; and everyone dances to shitty electronic disco-music.

THE WAVE (B-Videos101.com; 1981).

Initially produced as an AfterSchool Special, but ultimately premiering in primetime, this 46-minute made-for-TV drama is deadly serious yet often unbelievably heavyhanded. Based on an article by Ron Jones that appeared in the Spring 1976 edition of *The CoEvolution Quarterly* (entitled "Take as Directed"), it chronicled his unique 1967 experience while teaching at Cubberley High School in Palo Alto, CA, when Jones tested out some radical theories in mob psychology on a group of impressionable teens.

History teacher Ben Ross (Bruce Davison) is surprised by his students' reactions while studying the Nazi concentration camps — they can't believe that 10 million people could be exterminated without anyone around them caring — and, in response, he comes up with a particularly twisted lesson plan. The next day, Ross suddenly begins lecturing his class about silent obedience, proper posture, precise diction, and "strength through discipline," and these young lemmings lap up his 'cool' new curriculum. Of course, these kids must be incredibly dim — one day they're being taught about the blind allegiance of the German people under Hitler, and 48 hours later they're gleefully saluting to a new symbol of solidarity and change: The Wave!

Self-important Ross doesn't feel at all guilty about turning his students into unsuspecting guinea pigs, but where's the fun if his flaky idea doesn't go horribly wrong? Soon the kids have membership cards and a recruitment drive, begin snitching on others and using intimidation, while proudly boasting that The Wave has made them feel "born again." But when this simple little experiment goes one step too far, Ross decides to pull the plug during a mass rally that gives these easily-led morons a much-needed jolt of reality.

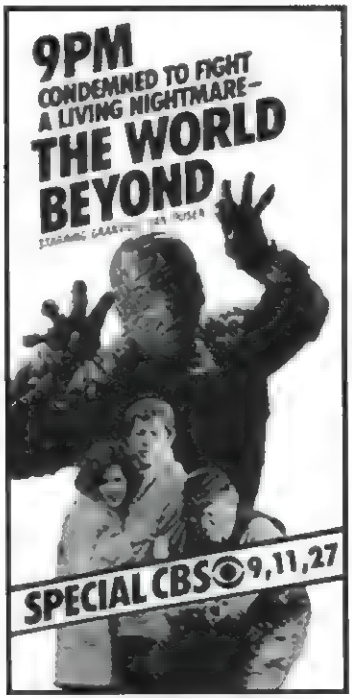
Davison (who, at the time, was starring on PBS in THE LATHE OF HEAVEN and on Broadway as THE ELEPHANT MAN) keeps the story grounded in reality, and he's a vast improvement over the young supporting cast and their clichéd characters. Dorothy-Hamill-haired school-brain Laurie (Lori Lethin, BLOODY BIRTHDAY) is creeped out by this fast-growing fad and finds herself in deep shit after penning an anti-Wave article for the school paper. There's also her unlikely jock-boyfriend (Jean Stapleton's son, John Putch) and class nerd Robert (Johnny Doran), who becomes one of The Wave's most rabid followers, only to end up emotionally crushed. Plus look for CHOPPER CHICKS IN ZOMBIETOWN's Jamie Rose as student Andrea. Its technical aspects are uniformly mediocre, from the direction by Alex Grasshoff (WACKY TAXI) to the cinematography by Hanania Baer (BREAKIN' 2: ELECTRIC BOOGALOO). The basic premise was also recently turned into a successful 2008 German feature.

THE WORLD BEYOND: "Monster" (All Clues No Solutions; 1978).

Director Noel Black first proved his filmmaking chops with the 1968 gem PRETTY POISON, and while this Canadian lensed, hour long pilot for an unproduced TV-series obviously lacked much of a budget, he keeps it tightly wound, unexpectedly eerie and sprinkled with a few good scares. Plus it features a kick ass creature — the Mud Monster! Part KOLCHAK, part GHOST

WHISPERER, the show's premise is summarized in its opening montage After surviving a near-death motorcycle accident, Paul Taylor (Granville Van Dusen) now has a connection to the spirit world, with pesky voices of the dead constantly nagging him to help out total strangers who're in danger.

For this episode, Taylor travels to the coast of Maine to aid pretty Marian Faber (JoBeth Williams), who fears that her brother Frank is in trouble. With his house located on tiny, remote Logan's Island, Taylor and Marian (along with a grizzled ol boat captain, played by Barnard Hughes) check it out, only to discover the place mysteriously boarded up and spattered with mud Plus Taylor knows all-too-well that Frank has already croaked, since he's receiving beyond-the-grave warnings from the guy.



Alas, Frank also dabbled in the Black Arts and now there's some sort of monster roaming the island. No surprise, the three are soon stranded, with their boat destroyed, neighbors murdered and a gooey Golem – made out of mud and lacking a soul – on the prowl Although the others are initially skeptical of Taylor's worries ("Mud pies don't go around killin' dogs," growls Hughes), no one's laughing once this slimy marauder finally unveils itself. And wait'll you see the creature's disembodied arm with the killer grip!

Van Dusen's hero has more brains than brawn, so it's no surprise this series wasn't picked up (even 30 years ago, network execs low balled their viewers' intelligence), while pre POLTERGEIST JoBeth has little to do but practice her future screaming skills. In fact, all of the character development is minimal, since the script by Art Wallace (who, a decade earlier, was the head writer for DARK SHADOWS) is more intent on mixing foreboding suspense with cheap chills He definitely succeeded with the later, as anyone who *still* remembers this rampaging Mud Monster will attest to .. This print is grainy and faded, but it was recorded off TV way back in 1978, so give 'em a break! On the positive side, it includes original commercials for L'Eggs, Wisk ("Ring around the collar!"), Gallo wine, Löwenbrau beer, plus local Memphis ads for Dobbs Ford and Montesi Supermarkets.

A FULL DAY'S WORK [Une Journée Bien Remplie] (Shocking Videos; 1973).

In the early-'70s, actor Jean Louis Trintignant was a fixture of international cinema — appearing in everything from arthouse hits (THE CONFORMIST, A MAN AND A WOMAN, MY NIGHT AT MAUD'S) to gritty cult gems (Sergio Corbucci's THE GREAT SILENCE, Giulio Questi's DEATH LAID AN EGG) — and made his first stab at directing with this delightfully murderous French black comedy. He also co-scripted with Vincenzo Labella (who wrote the 1971 Trintignant thriller WITHOUT APPARENT MOTIVE), and while this particular print lacked English subtitles, the dialogue is kept to a minimum and the story is quite easy to follow.

A man drives along a stretch of country road, when his car is suddenly grabbed by a scrap yard mechanical claw, lifted into the air, shaken, smashed, and dropped. Miraculously, the occupant ends up in the hospital, in critical condition; that is, until this killer reappears, disguised as a doctor, to finish the job. So who is this sinister perpetrator? He's Jean Rousseau (Jacques Dufilho), a simple baker by trade, who spends the next 24 hours on a cross-country journey, traveling from town to town via motorbike – along with a sidecar for his loving, elderly mother (Luce Marquand) — and slaughtering people! This is no random spree though, since Rousseau keeps a book with nine names and crosses each one off as they're dispatched.

Rousseau rarely cracks a smile as he goes about his brutal business, and each murder is different. There's a booby-trapped automobile, an assortment of firearms and even a crossbow is used during a Shakespeare dress rehearsal, with only minor snafus along the way (such as almost offing the wrong twin brother) Meanwhile, the harried police are on Rousseau's trail, with a car chase bringing some unexpected action to this otherwise leisurely-paced tale As dozens of heavily-armed cops guard his final target, it's the culmination of one long, extremely productive day for a determined executioner

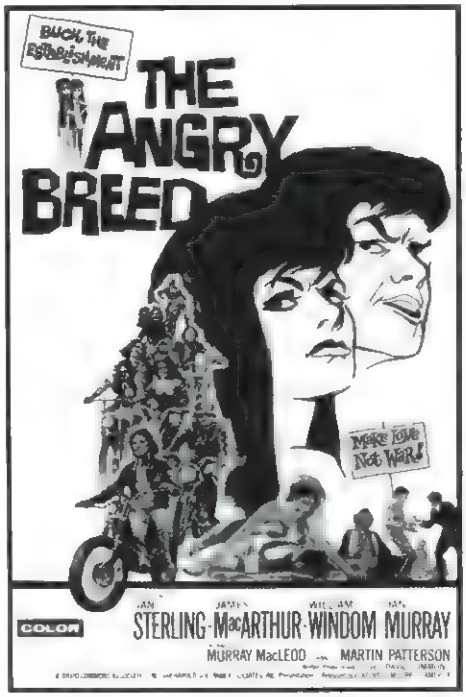
What is his specific motivation? The script slowly doles out the clues (such as an odd portrait of a young man, which Rousseau shows to each victim), and while the deaths aren't bloody, they provide the wonderfully demented highlights to this calculated vision of death and justice. All technical elements are exceptional, with cinematography by William Lubtchansky (LA BELLE NOISEUSE) and an exquisite score provided by Bruno Nicolai (and sprinkled with Mahler, Wagner, Verdi, and Bach during Rousseau's lengthy drives to his next victim). Plus I'd wager that a fair share of this film's high style can be attributed to its assistant director, future DIVA and BETTY BLUE auteur Jean Jacques Beinex.

THE ANGRY BREED (The Drive-In Connection; 1968).

Overwrought, overwritten and spectacularly stupid at times, the sole screen effort from writer-director David Commons is a wondrously convoluted drive-in mess. Sure, it's as dumb as a bag of hamsters, but at least it isn't boring, because the story (concocted by Rex Carlton, producer of THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE, who committed suicide before this film was released) doesn't know what the fuck it wants to be It's a violent biker flick! It's a Hollywood melodrama! It's a groovy love story! It's all three!

Three Nazi garbed bikers (led by HAWAII 5 0's James MacArthur as their clean cut "Führer," Deek Stacey) target a bikini clad teen on a private beach, but when they attempt to rape Diane (Lori Martin, six years after being menaced by Robert Mitchum in CAPE FEAR), a handsome stranger drives off these roughnecks. Diane's rescuer is Vietnam vet Johnny Taylor (Murray MacLeod), an ex Marine and full-time dreamer who's lugging around a screenplay based on his own life and penned by a famous Hollywood scribe. This kooky kid wants to star in it himself and, coincidentally, damsel in distress Diane's father, Vance Patton (William Windom), owns a movie studio!

Deek and his biker brothers have a vendetta against Johnny, and when the plot slows down, they suddenly pop up and chase these young lovers in a dune buggy Meanwhile, Vance sets this biographical film project in motion, but hopes to push Johnny out of it after making Diane jealous by hiring a flirtatious starlet (F TROOP's Wrangler Jane, Melody Patterson) as Johnny's co-star Of course, what's a late-'60s B-movie without some cheap psychedelia? On Halloween night, a party full of masked counterculture hipsters is the backdrop for Deek's plan to dose everyone with LSD, abuse Diane and sabotage Johnny's potential career. All of this nonsense ends in the screen's silliest, most-awkwardly-choreographed home invasion.



This was MacLeod's first big-screen break and his career quickly sputtered out, but he's not the worst acting offender here. Lori Martin's Diane is cute, wooden and a perpetually immature dimwit, while Jan Sterling (ACE IN THE HOLE) as her stuck-in-a-loveless marriage mother is spectacularly over the top. Jan Murray shows up as Johnny's backstabbing agent Morey, who also represents actor/biker/rapist-wannabe Deek; Suzie Kaye is his sexy secretary, who's sent to seduce Johnny, Karen Malouf plays a mute servant girl who Vance is banging on the side; and it's fun to see Windom as a lecherous, mean ol' bastard who ridicules his wife for being over-the-hill at 36 There's also cinematography by Gregory Sandor (FORBIDDEN ZONE, SISTERS), as well as on-screen musical contributions from Jamie & The Jury and fuzz-psych wonders Orphan Egg.

AIMEZ-VOUS LES FEMMES? [Do You Like Women?] (Cinema de Bizarre; 1964).

A lovesick schmuck becomes immersed in multiple murders, mistaken identities, mobsters, and even cannibalism in this French black comedy — now with English subtitles! Based on a novel by Georges Bardawil, and adapted by Gerard Brach and Roman Polanski (one year before the pair won acclaim for REPULSION), this dark, romantic farce was the sole feature by director Jean Leon (who, three years earlier, was first assistant director on LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD).

While dining at the elite Le Nirvana vegetarian restaurant, children's-writer Jerome Fenouic (actor-comedian Guy Bedos) discovers a fresh corpse in the men's room, but it vanishes by the time he tracks down a policeman, with only the man's hat left behind. He also has a much more pleasurable encounter in the form of lovely blonde Violette (Sophie Daumier) — who, because Jerome possesses the dead guy's chapeau, thinks he's someone else entirely and might know the whereabouts of her missing sister Marguerite.

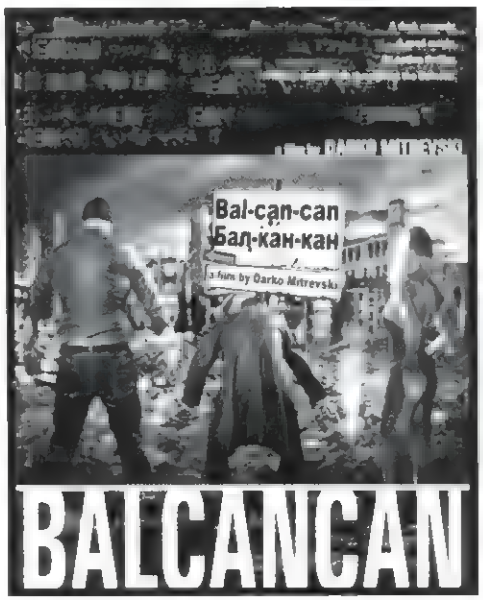
As bumbling Jerome attempts to seduce this beauty, he doesn't realize that he's become the target of a band of motley assassins and crooks. Soon he's shot at with poisoned-blowpipe-darts, rudely kidnapped from his bed, and faces a crippled thug searching for a Buddha full of drugs. But the biggest shock comes when he sneaks into Nirvana and finds beloved Violette, dead and laid out like a sumptuous deli platter. Eventually, Jerome becomes privy to a secret entreé on Nirvana's menu, courtesy of a religious sect involving masks, black robes and abnormal dietary desires (like a culinary version of EYES WIDE SHUT's orgy scene, but in this case, it's *intentionally* asinine).

Bedos and Daumier have excellent chemistry (which, no doubt, led to their marriage, one year later), while the supporting cast includes Grégoire Aslan as the Police Inspector on this increasingly convoluted case and Edwige Feuillere (who, during the 1930's and '40s starred in films for Abel Gance, Max Ophuls and Jean Cocteau) as Jerome's feisty Aunt Flo. The b&w cinematography by the incomparable Sacha Vierny (who also shot Resnais' MARIENBAD) is full of rich shadows, while the script laces this wildly-unpredictable mystery with kinky moments, drunken escapades, fresh corpses, and random absurdity (such as Jerome's final samurai-sword battle).

BAL-CAN-CAN (All Clues No Solutions; 2005).

Focusing on two oddball strangers and their shaggy trek across war torn Southeast Europe, this recent Macedonian feature is a bleak yet darkly-comical vision of a world in chaos. Plus you know writer-director Darko Mitrevski (GOODBYE, 20th CENTURY) won't be charting typical territory when it opens with toe tagged morgue corpses conversing with each other and welcoming a new arrival to their fridge — Santino Genovese (Adolfo Margiotta), who proceeds to tell the others his bizarre story...

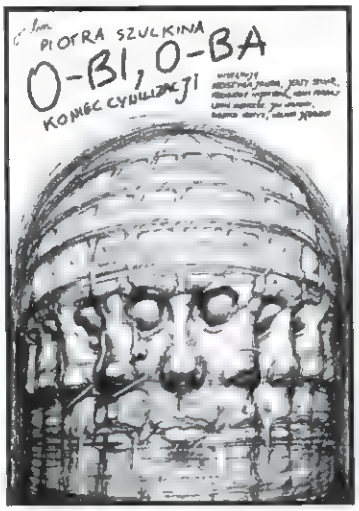
When Santino's small time-crook father fled to Italy from Tito's Yugoslavia as a young man, he left behind a blood-brother who ended up in jail instead. On his dad's deathbed, Santino promises to someday locate the son of that old friend. That's when we meet Trendafil (Vlado Jovanovski), an unabashed coward who wants nothing to do with the armed conflict between the Macedonian army and Albanian rebels (occurring *literally* outside his window), and instead embarks on a get-the-hell-out-of-town roadtrip to Bulgaria, joined by wife Ruza and his grouchy, wheelchair-bound grandmother. Faced with quack physicians, government bureaucracy and the fine art of corpse disposal, desperate Trendafil finally runs out of half-baked answers and contacts the son of his father's blood brother — with Santino enthusiastically joining them on their crazy misadventure.



That's only the tip of this cinematic iceberg's story though, because once Santino is onboard, their journey becomes more unpredictable, dangerous and violently absurd — thrusting them deep into the heart of local darkness. While searching for a stolen rug (with a corpse rolled-up inside it), they visit a surreal black market that reaches from Serbia to Bosnia, drug dealers, vicious ragtag factions, as well as Croatian and Muslim enemies now joined against a mutual enemy. Laced with sudden bursts of violence — one moment, everyone is happy, drunk and sharing a meal; the next, they're slaughtering each other over that same dinner table — our pair copes with just how screwed up this entire region is, even as Trendafil finally grows a pair and leads a revolt against one particularly monstrous bit of evil. Full of offbeat passion and humor, BAL-CAN-CAN is a twisted portrait of warfare and the strange bedfellows it manages to create.

O-BI, O-BA, END OF CIVILIZATION [O-bi O-ba, Koniec Cywilizacji] (European Trash Cinema; 1985).

Science-fiction visions of the future are often pretty damned bleak, but if you thought flicks like 1984, THX 1138 or BRAZIL were depressing, wait until you see what can come out of Poland — a country that was trapped under Soviet oppression for four decades and, during the '80s, struggled with martial law, food rationing and an economic meltdown. To his credit, writer-director Piotr Szulkin managed to create a claustrophobic, post-apocalyptic dystopia that reeks with gloom, despair and blind faith.



One year after nuclear war has ravaged the Earth, things are still a mess, with survivors living in a huge, domed shelter that makes the Russian Gulag look pleasant and inviting. Unable to venture outside, the population shuffles about without purpose and lives on hard-tack, electricity is unreliable, corpses litter the corridors, and most books have been destroyed for their pulp and turned into foodstuffs. The place is also falling apart, and if their protective dome continues to crack, it's arrivederci to all. The only shred of hope these poor bastards cling to are rumors of "The Ark", which will someday rescue them from this miserable shithole.

Jerzy Stuhr (Kieslowski's CAMERA BUFF) stars as Soft, a doughy bureaucrat who knows that this Ark story is one big whopper, fabricated to keep the masses from committing suicide from desperation and apathy. For much of the film, we follow Soft throughout his daily routine, dealing with all factions of this ragtag community — from scheming, mooching lowlife to the wealthy few who can afford alcohol, prostitutes and comparatively-palatial digs. Everyone seems to have their own misguided, murderous or downright mad plan on how to survive until the Ark arrives, as well as how to make it onboard, and when Soft learns that an aeroplane might be secretly stored in this vast complex, he too finds himself suckered in by false hope.

Cinematographer Witold Sobocinski (Polanski's FRANTIC) perfectly captures this society's dismal, stifling labyrinth of tunnels, storerooms, dank niches, and teaming marketplaces, with the tale's lone bright spot provided by Krystyna Janda (István Szabó's MEPHISTO, Wajda's MAN OF MARBLE) as Gea, a bubbly blonde whore who befriends Soft. Laced with grim beauty, absurd humor, plus an ending that's alternately sad, terrifying and dreamlike, O-BI O-BA is often brilliant — but definitely *not* a lighthearted night at the movies.

A BEAST WITH TWO BACKS (All Clues No Solutions; 1968).

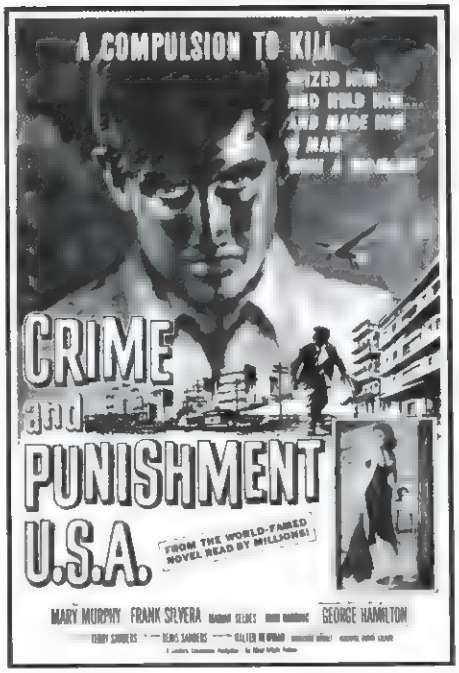
Based on a true story from the 1890's, this 70-minute, black and white TV-production — an episode of the BBC's acclaimed 1960's-series THE WEDNESDAY PLAY — from writer Dennis Potter is simpler and more compact than later epics such as BLACKEYES, but in the end, it's just as depressing and cynical about the human condition. More specifically, Potter focuses on how a simple fear of outsiders can fester into gossip, intolerance, lies, brutality, and religious hypocrisy. It's a message just as relevant today, 40 years after its initial telecast.

Italian immigrant Old Joe (Patrick Barr) and his beloved dancing bear Gina wander the rugged English countryside, earning spare change by happily performing (Joe plays the recorder while Gina spins in circles) for impromptu crowds. But this time, the pair have picked the

wrong village, because these simple country folk are obnoxious, mean-spirited, close minded, deceitful, and wholely unlikeable. Even the children are little monsters who chant "Dirty Eye-talian" at Joe, and after some nasty false rumors about the two take root, these bitter townsfolk drive away this poor, hungry old "Dago" and his big, gentle pet.

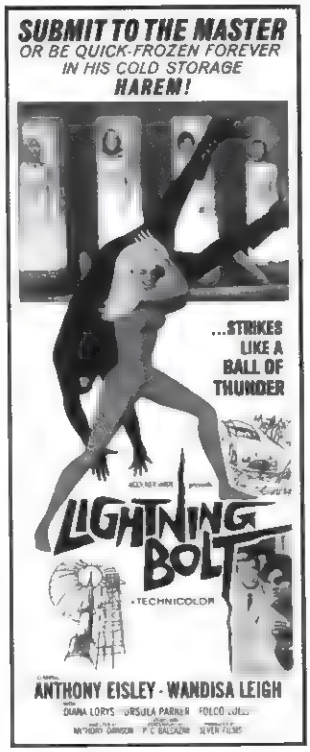
Violence erupts in the nearby woods when married Micky (Laurence Carter) learns that his longtime mistress is preggers, so he permanently shuts her up with a rock to the skull. Unfortunately, when abusive, Bible spouting local priest Ebenezer (Denis Carey) becomes convinced that his slow-witted adult son Rufus (Christian Rodska) is to blame for this dead "slut" and a visiting Police Inspector begins to investigate the killing, this 'Man of God' instead shifts the blame onto the innocent.

Well crafted by director Lionel Harris and cinematographer Ken Westbury (who later shot THE SINGING DETECTIVE and PENNIES FROM HEAVEN), Potter's deceptively-simple teleplay is a powerful indictment of how quickly a crowd can toss aside logic and humanity when fueled by mass hysteria. In this case, it leads to an unrepentantly barbarous finale, as the townsfolk get all dressed up for Sunday services *and* an explosion of bloodlust — ultimately blaming all of their assorted sins on a dancing bear, instead of the beast within.



LIGHTNING BOLT [a.k.a. Operazione Goldman] (The Drive-In Connection; 1966).

Take one sexist hero, a beefy B-actor, a few sultry supporting ladies, plus (believe it or not) a beer-magnate turned megalomaniacal super-villain, and what do you get? Yes, it's another in the long line of EuroSpy 007 wannabes, which flooded theatres in the mid-to-late-'60s (remember, adjusted for inflation, 1965's THUNDERBALL grossed as much as THE DARK KNIGHT) This Spanish/Italian production by director Anthony Dawson (a.k.a Antonio Margheriti) is fairly standard fluff, but redeems itself in the final half hour with some cut rate sci-fi goofiness.



When a top rocket scientist mysteriously disappears, the US State Department assigns brunette babe Capt Patricia Flanagan (Diana Lorys) to the case. To her annoyance, she's partnered with free-spending playboy-agent Harry Sennet (HAWAIIAN EYE's Anthony Eisley), who finds any opportunity to lock lips with his comely colleague. The pair pose as a happy couple and rent a bungalow near Cape Kennedy on the eve of a moon shot, but an evil mastermind (with a bevy of sexy female minions, of course) is planning to sabotage the mission, with Harry and Flanagan fleeing from an exploding hotel room, nearly drowned and dodging a fetching blonde with a pistol full of caustic acid

Eisley takes center stage in the second half, showing off his minimal action skills with a one man siege on a brewery that's the front for fiendish Rehte (Folco Lulli), who plans to put a laser cannon on the moon — hence, the missing scientist that kicked off this silly lark. The story finally shifts into high gear when Harry is taken captive in Rehte's *fully-automated* underwater lair (which saved the producers from hiring dozens of unnecessary background extras), complete with suspended-animation chambers and a lava-powered energy source

How do you make a bunch of ineptly-dubbed, obviously-European actors look like American secret agents? Slap a portrait of President Lyndon Johnson on the wall behind 'em, and no one will question it And don't forget to include lots of grainy, mismatched stock footage (e.g. NASA Mission Control) The producers saved all of their cash for the last reel instead, on Rehte's groovy HQ and its inevitable destruction. Co starring peplum-veteran Wandisa Leigh (a.k a Wandisa Guida) is an unwilling henchgirl whose father has been flash-frozen by Rehte, this is dopey and utterly disposable

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT U.S.A. (1959).

Sometimes you have to wonder just how stupid (or stoned) a producer would have to be to green light some of the films made in Hollywood Here's a good example from a half century ago: "Hey, let's adapt Fyodor Dostoevsky's Russian classic to a Los Angeles locale! Plus, we'll give it a beatnik vibe! Kids will *really* dig it!" All they needed was an up and coming young actor with the skills to carry this weighty role Enter 20-year-old, pre melanoma George Hamilton, in his film debut! Strangely enough, this half baked concept became a fascinating train wreck of a movie, courtesy of first time feature director Denis Sanders (SOUL TO SOUL).

Hamilton plays Robert Cole, a handsome (and supposedly brilliant) student with one serious problem. An elderly female pawnbroker has been beaten to death nearby, and Bob has a sackful of cash and a bloody crowbar stashed in his pad. Oh, shit! This mild-mannered dude is the killer! As the police search for suspects, Robert intellectualizes this brutal act and believes that only extraordinary, "superior man" assholes like himself have the right to break the law, in the name of the greater good

Although the cops (led by Frank Silvera's Police Lieutenant) quiz Robert about his connection to the victim, this egotistical schmuck thinks he can outsmart them (not to mention, insult any authority figure to their face). It isn't until a local vagrant abruptly accuses Robert of murder that he's the least bit shaken Meanwhile, future-Tony-winner Marian Seldes pops up as his older sister, and Mary Murphy (THE WILD ONE) is neighborhood gal Sally, who's suckered in by Cole's charms and, even after she turns to prostitution, is incapable of seeing the smarmy, condescending jerk that lurks under his Vitalis-ized hair

As tormented actors go, Hamilton is definitely no James Dean. He's not even a 4th-rate Sal Mineo. And seeing handsome but hamhanded George wrestle with this complex role is like watching a dog trying to do long division — it's oddly engrossing, but the guy is way, way out of his depth. The screenplay by multi Oscar-nominee Walter Newman (THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM) sticks fairly close to the plot points in Dostoevsky's book, but this harebrained take is stilted, uninvolving and rarely believable. There's b&w cinematography by the versatile Floyd Crosby (who shot everything from HIGH NOON to TEENAGE CAVE MAN), plus a jazzy score by the prolific Herschel Burke Gilbert, (who, throughout the '60s, was music director/composer for TV-shows such as THE RIFLEMAN, WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE and GILLIGAN'S ISLAND). Chalk this up as an overly ambitious dud.

PREMONITION [a.k.a. Head] (Cinema de Bizarre; 1972).

In the late-1970's, Alan Rudolph was considered the future heir to Robert Altman, and although he achieved moderate critical success with '80s outings such as CHOOSE ME, TROUBLE IN MIND and THE MODERNS, he never rose above the type of quirky fare you'd see at 2 a.m on the Sundance Channel. Like so many young filmmakers of his era, his first feature as writer-director was an overwrought mess packed with tacky hallucinations, amateur performances and tripped-out, self-important melodrama.

Carl Crow stars as Neil, our seedy hippie-narrator, who has a strange tale to tell. It begins three years earlier, when he helped a "drunken crackpot" college prof (Victor Izay) search for Mexican artifacts, only to freak out in the desert after finding an ancient Indian skeleton. Closer to the present day, Neil is a struggling rock musician who grabs a couple motorcycle riding pals — perpetually-stoned Andy (Tim Ray) and laid-back black dude Baker (Winfrey Hester Hill) — and they all head out to a secluded shack in order to jam.

The area is sprinkled with strange red flowering plants, and since Andy lives by the "if you can roll it, you can smoke it" rule, he's soon packing a Zig-Zag, toking up and, within minutes, having the same hallucination (featuring a shaggy Indian shaman) that traumatized still-shook up Neil years earlier. Unfortunately, there's far too much bickering between these longhairs and too little weirdness We get a few tired psychedelic visuals during the last reel's sparsely attended outdoor concert, and it culminates with zonked out Andy and Neil wandering in the dark and running into this pissed off Indian spirit.

I'm usually a pretty easy mark for dippy, counterculture claptrap, but this crude, self important, 79-minute bummer bored the bejesus out of me The acting reeks, the production values are threadbare, it's loaded with irritating sound effects, and (with the exception of low key Baker) you'll want to mow down all of these annoying characters with a speeding Buick. It's hard to believe that anyone involved in this cinematic sludge went onto an actual career in film, but in addition to Rudolph, cinematographer John Bailey graduated to high profile fare like THE BIG CHILL and ORDINARY PEOPLE, while assistant film editor Carol Littleton later edited E.T and BODY HEAT.

THE MAN IN THE BACK SEAT [a.k.a. L.A. Cab; Night Chase] (Gravedigger Video; 1970).

An ordinary taxi driver picks up the wrong passenger in this efficient and extremely quirky made-for-TV thriller, directed by the always-reliable Jack Starrett and first broadcast on 11 20/70. Based on a story by Collier Young (who earlier penned scripts for THE HITCH-HIKER and THE BIGAMIST, both directed by his ex wife, Ida Lupino), it features two compelling, sleep-deprived leads, plus a supporting cast littered with familiar character actors.

When bad weather delays his flight out of town, well dressed and deadly serious Adrian Vico (David Janssen) has to kill a night in Los Angeles. Cabbie Ernie Green (Yaphet Kotto) picks him up and, after bonding over a stiff drink, Vico abruptly asks if he'd be willing to drive him all the way to San Diego (over 120 miles!). Of course, Ernie is happy to pick up the extra dough; what he doesn't realize is that this film opened with a murder, so this could turn into one long and bumpy ride —

There are some unusual pitstops along the way (such as an all-night truck stop where they meet mini-skirted minx Victoria Vetri) and you never know what'll tick off this short-fused fare — getting spooked by some cops, encountering a small-town racist, or snapping at Ernie for asking too many damned questions — as Vico gets increasingly drunk and melancholy (amidst flashbacks to his once-happy family life, complete with pretty wife and kids). As their journey continues into the next day, a weird rapport develops between this unlikely pair, with the two checking out the ponies and Ernie helping Adrian elude the police manhunt.

Although the final act gets a little hokey, with an improbable showdown at the San Diego Zoo, its first hour is terrifically enigmatic and suspenseful. Janssen was always great at playing a determined son of a bitch and this gig is tailor-made, with caffeine 'n' desperation-fueled Vico wanted by every officer in California and unconcerned if he lives or dies. Although Kotto overdoes some of the more dramatic moments, he makes a solid everyman who's having the shittiest night of his life. We also get Elisha Cook Jr as a grumpy diner owner, Joe De Santis and Richard Romanus working a charter boat; Mel Berger (THE SAVAGE SEVEN) is a greasy snitch named Jumbo, and 19-year-old William Katt makes his screen debut as a bothersome Marine sentry. Adding immeasurably to its noir vibe is cinematography by the great Fred J. Koenekamp (PATTON, BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS).

THE GIRL IN BLACK STOCKINGS (Just For the Hell Of It; 1957).

In the opening minutes of this gloriously seedy murder mystery, the dead body of a famous actress — with her throat slashed and her entire body "cut up like a side of beef" — is discovered at a Utah tourist resort that's populated by a full roster of oddball guests, owners and employees. Based on a story by South African mystery writer (and three-time Ellery Queen Award winner) Peter Godfrey, this 74-minute desert noir has a twisty trajectory, while Richard Landau's script is liberally sprinkled with overripe dialogue that wouldn't seem out of place in TWIN PEAKS

As the local sheriff (John Dehner) investigates, we meet our potential suspects and/or additional victims. Ex Tarzan Lex Barker stars as high-powered L.A. attorney David Hewson, who uses his Know-It-All law-school-smarts to psychoanalyze the killer ("when they reach a peak of intensity, the brain explodes. madness escapes") and also finds time to romance irritatingly-timid guest Beth Dixon (Anne Bancroft).

There's also Julia (Marie Windsor, whose career ranged from Kubrick's THE KILLING to CAT WOMEN ON THE MOON) and her wheelchair-bound brother Edmund, who own the ritzy resort where this slaughter took place; a seedy private eye in search of a scoop; an alcoholic Indian found with a bloody knife; a platinum blonde temptress (voluptuous Mamie Van Doren) who enjoys hitting on older men and future-Tony-nominee Diana Van der Vlis as her roommate; plus a pre BONANZA Dan Blocker as a bartender When another corpse is found ("If this keeps up...we're gonna have to start raising taxes to build a morgue," the coroner jokes), it's clear that there's a psycho on the prowl — as secret desires are exposed and smitten characters discover that they're chumps

Barker is a woefully bland chunk of beekcake (here's one sign you're a mediocre actor: you're upstaged by the wallpaper!): Van Doren certainly knows how to fill out a strapless gown, but her airheaded role lacks any additional impact; while Bancroft harbors a deep, dark secret — that she's a divorcée! *Horrors!* Meanwhile, some of the funniest moments are courtesy of Ron Randell's paralyzed Edmund, since this wealthy, misanthropic bastard gets the choicest lines (like dismissing everyone as "miserable predatory creatures") Stuart Whitman even pops in at the very end to wrap up this puzzle. Director (and future Paramount production head) Howard W Koch also helmed B-movies such as FRANKENSTEIN 1970 and UNTAMED YOUTH, but had better luck as a producer, with hit titles like THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE and AIRPLANE!

A VACATION IN HELL (Shocking Videos; 1979).

Mixing a tropical paradise, skimpy '70s wardrobes, sitcom icons, and the type of generic perils you'd find on a supersized episode of FANTASY ISLAND, this made-for-TV survival tale was originally broadcast as a two-hour primetime premiere, but would've benefited from some major editing

and a 90-minute slot instead Director David Greene — who helmed everything from ROOTS, to the hippie drug-drama THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR, to the Lovecraft-based THE SHUTTERED ROOM — is usually pretty reliable, but here seems all too aware of the stinker he's been saddled with

Welcome to Club Horizon, a sun 'n' sand tourist hotspot in the middle of nowhere Denise (a pre-THREE'S COMPANY Priscilla Barnes) and Barbara (Andrea Marcovicci) are roommates, teenage Margaret (BRADY BUNCH's Maureen McCormick, 23-years-old but still stuck playing a 16 year old) is with her divorced mom Evelyn (GET SMART's Barbara Feldon), and roving-eyed romeo Alan (Michael Brandon) tries to charm any woman with a pulse.

Alas, their fun evaporates when Alan takes the four gals on an impromptu trip to a remote stretch of beach, their boat promptly springs a leak and they're stranded miles from home base with no chance of rescue. What's their brilliant solution? Hike back to the resort on foot, over hazardous terrain and up a steep mountainside, with no map, no compass, and McCormick and Barnes in hot pants. No surprise, they're soon lost in the wilderness and, during the night, Alan inadvertently kills a native boy who's in the midst of some ambiguous manhood ritual. This doesn't sit well with the jungle's only other loin-clothed stereotype, and soon our quintet are being stalked by one lone "savage." Gosh, that's *real* danger, all right!

Barnes plays a vain ditz who whines about a broken fingernail while they're struggling not to fall to their deaths; sensitive sap Marcovicci has a crush on Alan, Feldon is an insecure type; and cocky Brandon sports a white suit, feathered hair and suspenders — *not* a good look, even in the coke-'n'-disco 70s But it's McCormick who has the most unintentionally hilarious scene, when brainy 'kid' Margaret gets tipsy on rum, puts on 'adult' make-up, lets her inhibitions down, and tries to seduce Alan with an 'erotic' dance Oh, Marsha, Marsha, Marsha You can't act for shit.. Although the hokey script pretends that it's a feminist empowerment tract — with Barnes abandoning her precious make-up and all of the women showing more true grit than whiny Alan — cinematographer Harry May (DETROIT 9000) knows better, and wisely lingers on the ladies' legs, asses and brassiere-unencumbered torsos instead.

LEPTIRICA [The Moth] (European Trash Cinema; 1973).

Based on the story "Posle Devedeset Godina" [Ninety Years Later] by the late-19th-century author Milovan Glisic (who is considered the Gogol of Serbia), this made-for-Yugoslav-TV horror yarn by director-writer Djordje Kadijevic is crude, extremely low-budget but also unexpectedly scary at times Clocking in at 62 minutes, which is just about right for its slim narrative,

this print was in Serbo-Croatian with English subs

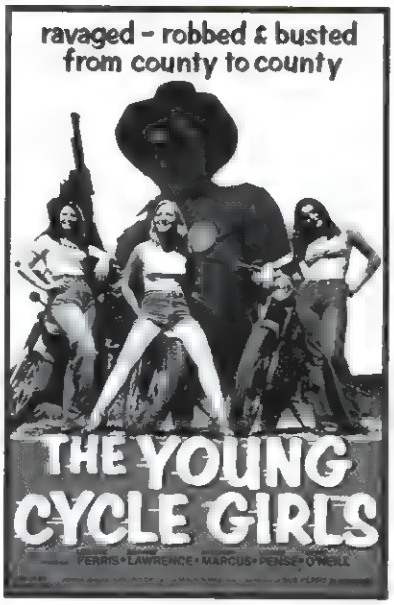
Set in a rural area during the early 19th-century, a hungry predator with extremely sharp teeth has been attacking people in the night. So far, four millers have been murdered in their sleep, the townsfolk have been forced to go without ground wheat for bread, and the deaths are blamed on the local legend of a century-old vampire known as Sava Savanovic. Elsewhere in the village, farmer Zivan's pretty, redheaded teenage-daughter Radojka (Mirjana Nikolic) wants to wed poor-but-devoted Strahinja (Peter Bozovic). Alas, her pigheaded dad refuses to agree to the marriage.

Determined to change Zivan's mind, lovesick Strahinja decides to impress the superstitious community elders by agreeing to be their next miller, despite all of the risks. Sure enough, he's attacked by this toothy terror on his first night and barely escapes. During the daylight hours, villagers try to find Sava's grave by consulting a deaf old woman, then unearthing a long-buried coffin and driving a stake through it — but they're unable to catch a tiny moth that flies out of the casket, which is apparently a very bad sign. Later they all drink, celebrate and aid Radojka in running off with Strahinja. Alas, some plans are never meant to be, as we learn during the film's genuinely freaky finale.

The production design is minimal, the acting is unremarkable and the characters lack depth (particularly Radojka, a typically vapid beauty who vacantly wanders the woods and delights in being an object of desire), but it's the vampire that makes LEPTIRICA so memorable. Although a hood covers much of its face during the attacks, we get a good gander at the beast's long fingernails, hairy skin and mouthful of pointy teeth — and unlike today's sparkly, TWILIGHT vamposeurs, this feral escapee from an old-fashioned fairy tale is the stuff of small children's nightmares.

THE YOUNG CYCLE GIRLS [a.k.a. Cycle Vixens] (Gravedigger Video; 1978).

Hot pants, cool chicks and the open road sounds like a potentially potent combo for this late entry in the motorcycle genre. Unfortunately, while the earliest outlaw biker outings were all about booze, violence, and stickin' it to The Man, this is merely three cute ditzs on Spring Break. There's no real storyline, just a string of brain-dead encounters — some are dumb, some are dangerous, but most of 'em are deadly dull. Recently, this film has been cited as a possible inspiration for Tarantino's DEATH PROOF, but except for one vaguely similar image, the connections are negligible.



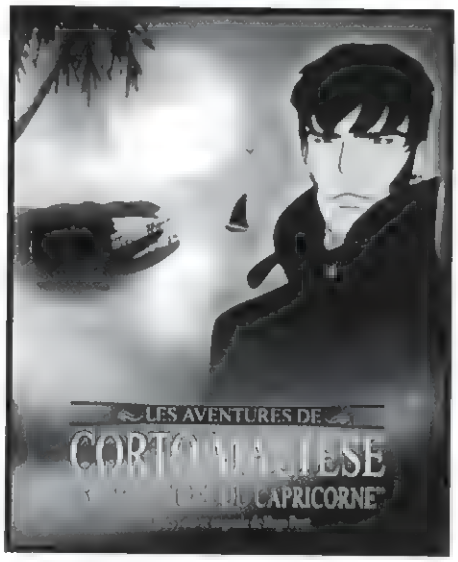
Three young, naive (but not particularly bright) girls are bored with their quiet Colorado hometown and, since they each own a bitchin' motorcycle, decide to spend their school break on an impromptu road trip to California, to check out the ocean. What's the next move for these teen rebels? Sheila (blonde Daphne Lawrence) and younger sis Sherry (brunette Deborah Marcus) ask permission from their dad, Priss (Loraine Ferris) skips out on her over-protective parents, and they're off (in color-coordinated outfits, no less)!

Their adventure takes a detour due to a blowout, with the sisters confronting a "dirty pervert" in a black pick-up (with a Stuntman Mike-style skull and cross-bones sloppily painted on its door). Meanwhile, Priss gets frisked by a power-hungry, fuckwit lawman and the gals end up stealing his gun. They stop for a swim, run into characters that look like refugees from DAZED AND CONFUSED, and meet a pair of junkie hitchhikers who shoot up heroin 'round the campfire and steal a couple of their bikes. Most annoying, their trip is padded out with long, tedious takes of cycles traveling down rural highways and random sightseeing.

Our clueless middle class trio are continually in trouble, yet get away without any real repercussions — until the nihilistic ending, that is (which is this turd's only valid comparison to EASY RIDER). Although this particular 71 minute print has all of the swearing bleeped, the film's glorious, non-stop technical ineptitude remains! There's amateur-level acting throughout, putrid production values and lame comic relief (e.g. they give an overweight black girl a lift. Get it? She's fat and she's on a motorcycle! Hahaha!). Director-producer Peter Perry (a.k.a. Bethel Buckalew) earlier helmed oddities like KISS ME QUICK!, but this gig is comparatively straightforward, with a so-called 'script' by John Arnoldy (SUPERVAN) and cinematography by Ron Garcia (who graduated to films for Francis Coppola and David Lynch).

ANNA PUCHALSKI; Jersey City, NJ.

CORTO MALTESE AND THE SIGN OF THE CAPRICORN [Corto Maltese: Sous Le Signe du Capricorne] (European Trash Cinema: 2002). Hugo Pratt, the Italian-born author/illustrator of the *Corto Maltese* bande desinee is an institution in France. And with Studio Canal's long history of producing Japanese animated French classics that goes back to the early-'80s (LE PETITE PRINCE, et al), this 2002 04 made for-TV series is rather standard fare, but that's not a put down. While the animation itself is typical no frills anime, the character design and settings are straight out of the graphic novels. The opening montage even includes a few of Pratt's delicate watercolor sketches. Of the four Corto Maltese films, CAPRICORN seems to be the lesser known, the others being LA COUR SECRETE DES ARCANES LA BALLADE DE LA MER SALEE, and LA MAISON DOREE DE SAMARKAND . Directed by Richard Danto and Liam Saury, CAPRICORN opens with a narration by Morgan, a Voodoo mystic who has plotted out our hero's horoscope and placed him in the house of Capricorn. Set in Brazil in the late-teens/early-1920's, with European Colonists dominating the islands while pirates and thugs run rampant over the towns, Maltese's companions include a drunk professor named Steiner and Tristan, a young man who receives psychic messages from a Voodoo god while trying to avoid the sinister machinations of those who desire to steal his fortune, plus an Asian madam who hides small throwing knives in her coif Jaded but pure of heart, Maltese is the last romantic icon of colonialism. Drawn in by the promise of adventure and potential fortune, Corto decides to help Tristan locate the lost continent of Mu and unravel the mystery surrounding the boy. Along the way, they assist Brazilian Rebels in overthrowing a tyrannical military leader, meet Guyanian Aboriginals and find Tristan's lovely long-lost sister In the midst of CAPRICORN's conclusion there is a minor side-story involving playing cards lost Spanish gold, a mysterious woman, and a ship's captain named Rasputin, which lacks some of the depth of the main tale but adds a little much-needed action In French with English subtitles.



CROWS 0 [Korôzu Zero] (2007). It's hard not to compare director Takeshi Miike's CROWS 0 to BLUE SPRING — both feature juvenile delinquents in a graffiti-covered public school, bullying students, menacing teachers, holding court from rooftops, making and breaking their connection to local Yakuza, not to mention being based on a popular Manga. But where BLUE SPRING takes a dark, contemplative, even realistic view, Miike's teenage gangsters are slick and larger than life... Shun Oguri, who is well on his way to becoming a Miike regular after his turn in the well-received SUKIYAKI WESTERN DJANGO, is best known for playing dreamy pretty boy Rui in the latest incarnation of the seemingly neverending dorama [soap opera] HANA YORI DANGO. Let's just say CROWS is a very different sort of High School story, and his Genji is no soft-hearted poet Likewise there is a play for the obviously ironic, typical of Miike's sense of humor — a rumble during the school's opening ceremony is flavored by the Principal pleading with the students not to fight and disappoint their parents, to no avail, of course A cast of good-looking teens can be a real risk, but CROWS wears it well. Takayuki Yamada as gang leader Serizawa "The Beast" has come a long way from regrettable fluff like DENSHA OTOKO — one might even think that Miike cast his violent leads with their idol images in mind... The School of Crows, as this particular institution is known, is the roughest, toughest place around. Alma Mater of assorted Yakuza, even they fall victim to the current class of badasses. But no one gang has ever held the entire school, something Genji intends to change before leaving to take his father's spot in "The Organization." The current top baddies challenge the police, subdue their classmates and play Mahjong on the school roof when not engaged in their own takeover plans. Genji slowly amasses an army of his own, class by class, even as Serizawa, the current ruling thug, does the same. The lone female is played by pop idol Ruka Aizawa (ONE MISSED CALL) who does an improbable R&B synchronized dance number in a CBGBs esque venue, following a punk band old enough to have fathered most of the cast, and then proceeds to get menaced and rescued repeatedly throughout the film Despite some of the excessively slick ornaments, this is, at heart, a dark film about misspent youth heading into a grim future. The characters are fascinating to watch, if not sympathetic (something BLUE SPRING achieves effortlessly, but would be lost amidst all of the shiny trappings here). Comic relief comes in the form of low-level Yakuza chief Ken (Kyosuke Yabe, from DEAD OR ALIVE), who mentors the socially limited Genji in making allies through other means than beating the crap out of them. In a way, CROWS 0 is DEAD OR ALIVE, Junior Class, with the same mix of drama, breathtaking cinematography, fancy editing, and absurdist comedy framing the violent centerpiece. It culminates in a battle royale set to a sappy pop ballad sung by the token girlfriend, as the boys tear each other to bits. A wholly enjoyable experience, one can only hope the sequel brings more of the same

ADAM GROVES; El Segundo, CA.

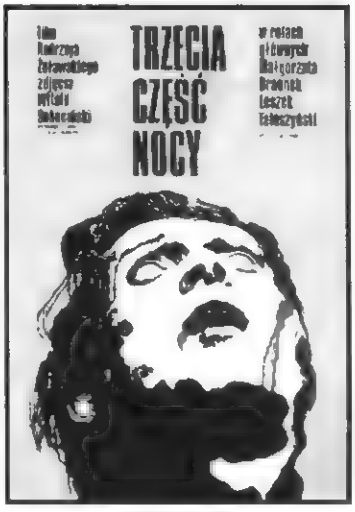
X, Y (2004) This is one hell of a freaky, disturbing flick A digitally lensed adaptation of Michael Blumlein's infamous 1993 novel, it may just be the last word in gender confusion, body piercing and sadomasochistic romance. It has Frankie (Melissa Murphy), a disgruntled erotic dancer, undergoing some kind of psychic fugue upon hearing the blare of a siren that briefly renders her unconscious She comes to with total amnesia but convinced of one incontrovertible fact: that she's a man. Such a set-up might seem to promise a body switch comedy along the lines of SWITCH or FREAKY FRIDAY, but the makers of X, Y have something far more twisted in mind. Frankie's live-in boyfriend Terry (Jamie Harrold of KINGDOM HOSPITAL and THE LAST WINTER) is convinced s/he's putting on an act in order to force him to prove his love, while Frankie in turn focuses all the anger and resentment engendered by her predicament onto Terry. Thus their relationship grows increasingly perverse, with Frankie enthusiastically torturing Terry and he submitting all-too-willingly Things take a turn for the psychotic when Frankie takes up knitting, and uses this skill in novel fashion on her lover's torso...and eventually his face. First time writer-director Vladimir Vitkin does a smooth job navigating this psychosexual minefield, turning in a sleek, good looking film that begins as a gritty urban drama, morphs into a quasi-supernatural thriller and ends up firmly in Cronenberg territory. Likewise, actress Melissa Murphy succeeds in effectively dramatizing the different shades of Frankie, a tawdry sexpot who becomes a sexually confused tomboy, only to blossom into a full-blown seductress As for the overall project, it's a first-class freak out that to date hasn't been exhibited anywhere outside the festival circuit Let's hope that situation changes, as in my view any film this fucked-up deserves a shot at traumatizing unsuspecting audiences everywhere

JOSEPH KILIAN [Postava K Podpirani] (1963). The spirit of Franz Kafka lives on undiluted in this little-known but damned evocative tribute to his work, a wildly surreal totalitarian allegory about a nameless man looking for someone called Joseph Kilian. We don't learn the reason for this desperate search, and nor does the guy, despite his best efforts, ever find the elusive

Joseph K The protagonist adopts a cat for reasons he (and we) can't entirely fathom, but a bit later returns to find the cat rental store completely deserted This leads him, cat in tow, into a labyrinthine official building that appears far bigger inside than out, and a bureaucratic nightmare that's quintessentially Kafkaesque. JOSEPH KILIAN, emerging from Franz Kafka s hometown of Prague, is more Kafka-like than any of the more famous films directly adapted from his writing (such as Welles' THE TRIAL and Haneke's THE CASTLE). It's also quite impressive from a filmmaking standpoint, with a nicely measured pace and genuinely dreamlike élan broken (but never compromised) by occasional avant-garde flourishes — sudden freeze frames, scenes played over and over, et cetera The directors were Paval Juracek and Jan Schmidt, and JOSEPH KILIAN is one of the key works of the Czech cinema New Wave of the sixties (which includes essentials like DAISIES and THE END OF AUGUST AT THE HOTEL OZONE, both scripted by Juracek and the latter directed by Schmidt). It remains in my view among the most memorable such films, and, best of all, only runs 38 minutes, so is mercifully free of the boring parts of Kafka's fiction.

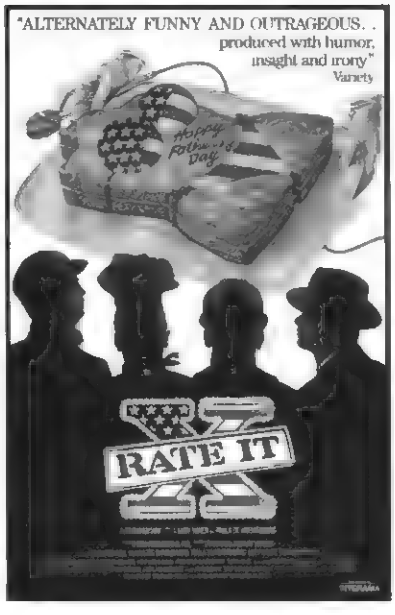
PICTURES FROM THE FLOATING WORLD (1995). An Asian woman goes mad aboard a haunted space station in this 30-minute sci-fi oddity from writer director Jeanne Lusignan It seems the station, hovering near the sun, is in danger of being engulfed by solar flares; the protagonist, guided by ghostly visions, is the only one of the multi-ethnic cosmonauts aboard the structure who's aware of the danger. The whole thing, lensed in ultra grainy black and white with occasional snatches of color, is low budget and amateurish to an oft-distracting degree and burdened with a narrative (inspired by a traditional Japanese ghost story) that feels best suited to a mediocre episode of STAR TREK. But the film is not uninteresting Lusignan began her career as a production designer, and the elaborate design of the space station's interior is the best thing about the project, nearly belying the non-budget. Various imaginative touches also serve to help things along, like a shot of the heroine's pet mouse rolling around in a transparent ball intercut with quick shots of its owner inside the ball, and a dream sequence that hauntingly contrasts the web-like exterior of the station with a spider web being ripped apart A lyrical, poetic mood is quite vividly evoked, seeming to promise great things from its talented creator, who unfortunately has yet to deliver.

THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT [Trzecia Czesc Nocy] (1971). The elusive first feature by Poland's delirious, visionary Andrzej Zulawski, who'd go on to helm crazed masterworks like POSSESSION and SZAMANKA THE THIRD PART OF THE NIGHT is in its own way every bit as wild as those efforts, even though it's an ostensibly sincere historical drama centering on a little known (by Americans, at least) chapter of WWII: the Weigl Institute, where several Polish intellectuals avoided deportment at the hands of occupying Nazis by allowing their blood to be sucked by lice, which were then used to create a typhus vaccine. Zulawski's father was one of several "feeders" employed by the institute, and the film is based on his experiences — although the senior Zulawski's original script was heavily rewritten to include quite a few bizarre and excessive elements recognizable to viewers of his son's later films The narrative arc is particularly Zulawski-ish in the way it begins as a more-or-less straightforward account of life under Nazi rule a la THE PIANIST that gradually morphs into a schizophrenic horror-fest topped off by a JACOB'S LADDER-esque finale. But the film's weirdest scenes are ironically the most reality based I'm referring to the sequences in which the protagonists go about their business in the Weigl Institute, dispassionately discussing philosophical issues around a table while hordes of teeming lice — packed into tiny cages strapped to the men's bare legs — eagerly drink their blood Obviously such a concept brings to mind any number of socio-political metaphors, and you can be sure Zulawski, never a filmmaker known for his subtlety, covers them all.



PAUL ARMENTANO; Vallejo, CA

RATE IT X (1985). If you didn't already know that the first rule of advertising is: 'sex sells' and that *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt made millions objectifying women, then you may be one of the dozen people left in America who will be enlightened after viewing RATE IT X As for the rest of us, Paul De Koenigsberg and Lucy Winer's low-budget documentary will neither edify nor entertain. The filmmakers' heavy-handed and vapid take on the subject of sexism yields little substance, yet reeks with self importance. Why is anyone's guess, as the feminists' superficial effort is as one dimensional as a *Penthouse* centerfold. Armed with a microphone and bizarre white glove (the only part of the directors' anatomy ever shown on camera), De Koenigsberg and Winer travel the nation soliciting the opinions of random males — many of whom (e.g., cable-access legend 'Ugly George' Urban; delusional sleaze merchant Joel M. Reed, who describes his repellent 1976 film BLOODSUCKING FREAKS as a "wholesome, good-hearted... sophisticated comedy"; and late-*Hustler* cartoonist Dwaine B. Tinsley, who tries unconvincingly to defend his socially irredeemable animated creation 'Chester the Molester' as "just a goofy kind of guy") reinforce the filmmakers' preconceived notions that the typical male thinks only with his crotch. (Women, the gender with which the directors' sympathies clearly lie, apparently have no opinions regarding their portrayal within American culture, as not one female is ever featured on camera.) Yet despite the filmmakers' palpable disgust for what they perceive to be society's acceptance of female objectification, De Koenigsberg and Winer are perfectly content to treat their own subjects like props. None of the men profiled in RATE IT X, including those listed above, are credited, nor do the directors ever provide any sort of context or balance to their viewpoints Ultimately, what the audience is left with is nothing more than a steady diet of nameless caricatures whose societal worth (in the minds of the filmmakers', that is) is based almost entirely upon their gender — an ironic twist that makes the content of RATE IT X virtually indistinguishable from that of the very industry it seeks to condemn.



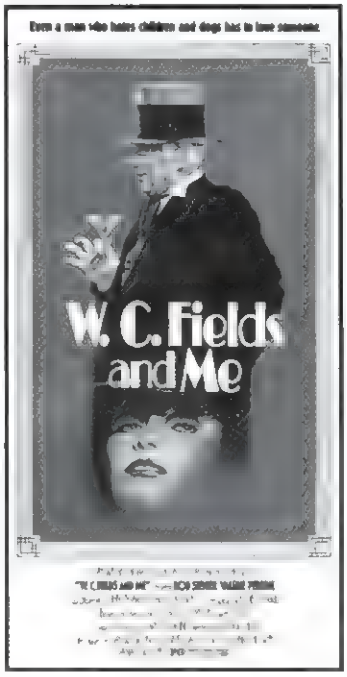
GIMME AN 'F' [a.k.a. T&A Academy 2] (1984). "In today's world torn by terrorism, immorality, and wanton destruction, the role of cheerleading shines like a beacon for the world to see!" Clocking in at nearly two hours, GIMME AN F' is arguably the BEN HUR of the 1970's/early-'80s 'cheerleader subgenre (REVENGE OF THE CHEERLEADERS, CHEERLEADERS' WILD WEEKEND, BLOODY POM POMS). Yet, despite the film's length there's nary a naked pom pom to be found, an unusual (and disappointing, to say the least!) twist given the subject matter — made even stranger because director Paul Justman (STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN) allegedly shot some 56 minutes of explicit sex footage, virtually all of which ended up on the cutting room floor. (Legend has it that the producers had a sudden change of heart during filming and decided to remove the picture's hardcore elements in favor of a more MPAA friendly plotline.) What audiences are left with is a mildly entertaining teen comedy that's equal parts MEATBALLS, FOOTLOOSE and BRING IT ON First-time cheerleaders, the Ladies of Perpetual Hope's Moline Ducks, are the outcasts of Beaver View's Cheerleading Camp ("Beaver fever — catch it!") until 25 year old head instructor Tom Hamilton (Stephen Sellen, looking like a cross between Kevin Bacon and Ted McGinley) takes the team under his wing. ("I can turn a tube of toothpaste into a triple A cheerleader," he boasts) Hamilton's secret to cheerleading success: "sex" — a plot twist that no doubt sounded great on paper but that distributor 20th Century Fox likely put the kibosh on after learning that the script called for Hamilton's initial then abruptly aborted love interest to be only 16 ("Will you wait for me while I'm in prison?" he asks) After an all-too-brief build up, Hamilton bets Beaver View CEO Bucky "Dr Spirit" Berkshire (CAGNEY & LACEY regular John Karlen) that the not-so-mighty Ducks will detnrone the Cobra Kai of high-school cheerleading squads — reigning champs the Fudge High Falcons — at the Camp's annual tournament. If he wins, Dr Spirit will pay the disgruntled instructor $10,000, but if he loses, he'll be forced to sign on as a Beaver View lifer for the next five years Will Tom Hamilton's PG-rated sexual energy, an assortment of GYMKATA and FLASHDANCE-inspired dance moves, and some last-minute *Hustler* approved full-body makeovers be enough to transform the ugly ducklings into sultry cheerleader champs? Is "Gimme an F" followed by "Gimme a U?"

BRETT TAYLOR; Knoxville, TN.

THE MAN (1972). He's a man, see. But he's a cool black dude, so he's The Man, if you follow. But he's also THE MAN, get it, like the white man, right? The establishment. Clever, huh? Well, that's about the only humor you're going to get from THE MAN, a movie which assumes it would take an act of God (i.e. the President being crushed by a ceiling) to get a black President. Were they right? By the time you read this, we'll know. The problem with THE MAN is not that it's campy or hokey, but that it's not hokey enough. THE MAN's main point seems to be to assure us that when a black man does inevitably become the Man, er, President, he will do everything in the most reasonable way possible, with all the necessary gravitas and all of that. After all, no one could ever get that far in politics if they were corrupt, could they? There just happen to be a few bad apples, like old meanie Burgess Meredith, who grumbles, "The White House isn't white enough for me." In fact, the whole reason a catfish farmer's son (James Earl Jones) gets the office in the first place is that everyone else is too noble to accept it, from the weak, wheelchair bound Veep (Lew Ayres) to the just plain noble Secretary of State (William Windom), so they give it to the President Pro Tempore. The Sec's Lady Macbeth wife (Barbara Rush) is pretty pissed too, saying, "I'm married to a man whose principal accomplishment to date is to be kingmaker to a jiga boo." Rod Serling was given the job of hacking Irving Wallace's nearly 800-page book down to a handful of subplots, and it's clear from Jones' endlessly educated but rarely believable dialogue that Serling was really gunning for one last Emmy. He even found a part for Martin Balsam, as if hoping for some residual good luck from his previous political script SEVEN DAYS IN MAY. And this might have won Emmys too, but ABC got overconfident and decided to release it straight to theatres, notwithstanding the fact that Wallace's politics 'n' porn epic THE SEVEN MINUTES flopped on screen the year before. Joseph Sargent directs in an unusually unaffected manner, and the result is less dated than a lot of other films of the era. The film gets stuck on a subplot about an American student assassinating a South African politician, as Jones condemns assassination not because it's an irrational act but because it's too rational, or, in Serling's words, "cool stuff, bloodless.. a master plan that comes out of a convocation of lizards." This comes not long after a speech in which Jones decries crooked politicians "who would plot and manipulate and dig up bones after dark...in alleys and tunnels and subterranean crypts." Much of the running time is given to Jones bitter debates with his right on radical daughter (Janet MacLachlan), who thinks he's one more "house nigger." The most annoying thing is the way no one's political party is identified. For all we know these people could all be Whigs, flat earthers, or Dixiecrats. Some "controversial" movie. The movie also strikes a compromise first by having this daring President take a stance against South Africa (which puts him light years ahead of Ronald Reagan), then having him decide to toss the assassin to the apartheid wolves. OK, Jones and his predecessor support a minority rights bill, so they can't be Republicans, can they? Jack Benny makes his last screen appearance here, and his material isn't the freshest. He's still making fun of his flop THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT.

FUTURE SHOCK (1972). Unnerving electronic music plays as a couple walk through the park in silhouette. News footage, punctuated by screams, is spliced in to jarring effect. A man falls over from a gunshot. A horrifying car crash! The couple approaches and, holy fuck! They've got metal faces! It must be a psychedelic work by one of those daring experimental filmmakers like Bruce Conner or Stan Brakhage, right? No, it's brought to you by the McGraw Hill book publishers, who've thrilled students for years with such page-turners as *Beginning Algebra* and *The McGraw-Hill Handbook of English Grammar*. Yes, FUTURE SHOCK is surely the trippiest educational film of all time. It's as if they were trying to induce flashbacks in burnt out '70s kids. Trust me, you don't need to take anything beforehand to trip on this movie, although it surely intensifies the effect. Cigar-puffing, black clad Orson Welles is there to explain it all, after laughingly boasting about how he gets to travel all over the world and has the run of various international country houses whenever he wants them. It seems Orson has been making observations about our modern technology, and his observations happen to coincide with Alvin Toffler's runaway bestseller *Future Shock*. It seems that the future has arrived too soon, and it's causing us stress. Shock. Future shock. We have too much choice and too much freedom, and it's leading to buildings being knocked down, X rated movies, men marrying each other, religion being altered in vague unspecified ways, and, apparently, hippies punching each other in the groin. "Nothing is permanent anymore," Welles gravely intones after a little girl tosses away an old doll. If this movie is to be believed, we will soon be nomads who change colors, visit spaceports, don't ever know our parents, and enter a new group marriage every couple of years. If all this sounds a little alarmist to you, maybe even a little *reactionary*, I'll just mention that Toffler's work faded from the public eye only to suddenly become courant again in the '90s when Newt Gingrich revealed himself to be a big fan. Finally Toffler himself shows up and tries to talk the Japanese out of industrialization (didn't work). It's funny how a movie that purports to be so shocking now seems so nostalgic. Then we see footage of children as Welles assures us they'll soon be crushed by future shock unless we act now. What we're supposed to do is unsure — judging by this, Toffler seems to have been better at startling pronouncements than actual solutions. The world of 1972 certainly looks a lot freer than that of today, what with cool gas-guzzling cars selling for $3492, one-night stands on the beach, and airports full of chain smoking idealistic hippies. Looks a lot more fun than being tortured in Guantanamo Bay.

W.C. FIELDS AND ME (1976). Hollywood stars of the '30s and '40s were still beloved in the 1970's, as evidenced by Universal's production W.C. FIELDS AND ME. Many still held affection for the sarcastic.eccentric humor of W.C. Fields, so wouldn't they be thrilled to see their comic hero exposed as a pathetic, lonely alcoholic? Guess not. W.C. FIELDS AND ME bombed, as did Universal's other biopic GABLE AND LOMBARD. The script was supposed to be based on a popular memoir by Fields mistress, Carlotta Monti, but the studio threw out most of the book (too mundane, I guess) and hired the guy who wrote "How Much is That Doggie in the Window?" to concoct a bogus but hopefully more colorful story. How seriously are we supposed to take the movie's view of the man when we know they're making it all up anyway? Late in the movie, the comedian's generosity is demonstrated when he suddenly decides to give the gift of a hooker to a dwarf pal who's been living in a hovel the past twenty or thirty years while Fields has been basking in the Beverly Hills sun. But how can we be moved by this if we know there was no actual dwarf? Should we be outraged by a subplot that has Fields sabotaging Monti's film career, when he actually gave her bit parts in his movies? I wouldn't put too much stock in the explanations for why Fields was the way he was, such as the revelation he disliked dogs because they could still smell the hobo on him. He even helpfully explains his comedy to us by stating that his aim is to take the air out of all the "self satisfied bastards." Overall though, I suspect director Arthur Hiller and everyone else believed the real appeal was the chance to hear a Code era actor talk dirty on screen, as he wasn't allowed in real life. Rod Steiger embodies the legendary comic about as well as anybody could, and Stan Winston got paid a lot of money to stick some putty on Steiger's nose. Valerie Perrine is Monti who is portrayed as a tolerant saint who didn't even sleep with the man for weeks after moving in with him. After witnessing him deliver a rant about how Eleanor Roosevelt should stay home and wash the President's jockstrap to a couple of IRS agents, the young lady finds herself falling for Fields' acerbic sense of integrity. You didn't think she'd move in with a grotesque old man just for his money, did you? Shame on you! Fields spends most of his time cavorting with the almost-as-drunk writer Gene Fowler (Louis Zorich) and the even more drunk John Barrymore (Jack Cassidy). The voice of reason is provided by a movie mogul(!) played by THE GODFATHER's John Marley, but this time he doesn't wake up to a dead horse. Oh yeah, studio chiefs, they're so moral, like that nice gangster pimp Harry Cohn. Gregory LaCava is only rumored to have directed some scenes for Fields' movies, yet here we get the impression he did everything — a slap in the face to the real directors, Edward F. Cline in particular. LaCava is por-



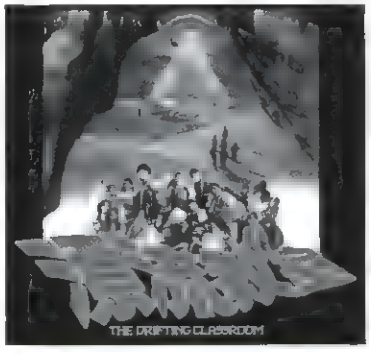
trayed by Allan Arbus, who himself later got to be portrayed in a heavily fictionalized manner in FUR AN IMAGINARY PORTRAIT OF DIANE ARBUS. All this apparently wasn't unreal enough, so they invented the dwarf sidekick, Ludwig (Billy Barty), to pal around with Fields in the early scenes before being abruptly dropped. The combination of pathos and Steiger's grotesque appearance makes for a pretty dreary affair at times, but if you're not too offended by the phony portrayal of a comedy genius you may find it diverting. With a red haired Kenneth Tobey and apparently a Monti cameo somewhere.

MIKE SULLIVAN; Mountaintop, PA.

DONDI (notavailableondvd.com; 1961). As a movie, DONDI is an abject failure: but as a tax dodge, the film is a triumph. In fact, I will take it one step further and declare DONDI to be the CITIZEN KANE of tax dodgery. Of course, there are those that would claim that DONDI was never intended to be a PRODUCERS-styled scam or that the film managed to be a 'minor success.' To those people let me just say this. If DONDI was intended to entertain audiences why was it based on a comic strip that had less cultural impact then Mary Worth and Mark Trail combined? Why was the soundtrack dominated by a wheezing harmonica of hate? And, most importantly, why was David Kory cast in the title role when he was clearly stuck in a persistent vegetative state? Written and directed (somewhat improbably) by Albert Zugsmith, Dondi tells the mawkish story of an Italian war orphan (Kory) who is found sleeping under a bench by an American G.I. (David Janssen) on Christmas Eve. Unwilling to let this poor child die of exposure, Janssen drags him back to his barracks where Kory's cold dead eyes and obsessive need to call everyone "buddy" (including God, or should I say, "Mr. Big Buddy") melts the hearts of Howling Janssen and his Cliched Commandoes. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and when the troops receive their discharge papers Kory follows the soldiers and stows away on their ship. From there the film turns into a lame fish-out-of water comedy as Kory gets lost in New York City and is frightened and confused by such modern conveniences as mannequins and hats. After a harrowing run-in with the law, Kory is turned over to the Immigration Department, whereupon a major campaign is created by Walter Winchell and the first lady of American mediocrity, Patti Page, to keep Dondi in America. Like many of the asinine ideas that dribble out of Michael Medved's brain, I disagree with his assessment of Kory in *The Golden Turkey Awards* as the worst child actor of all time. Because limiting Kory to the field of child acting is a mistake. He's not the worst child actor of all time. He's the worst *actor* of all time. And once you factor in his shrill, robot with a head cold voice and his fetal David Schwimmer looks, Kory also becomes the worst person of all time. But then I'm being way too hard on Kory. After all, it was his dazed, non-performance that kept me interested in the movie. Did Kory audition for the role or did Zugsmith find him licking the windows of a local Carl's Jr. and decide that a star was born?

THE BALLAD OF SMOKEY THE BEAR (All Clues No Solutions; 1966). I love Smokey the Bear, but as a Smokey the Bear fan I often find it difficult to reconcile with Hollywood's disrespectful take on the character. For example: even though Christopher Nolan's summer blockbuster — *The Dark Knight* — managed to capture the dark, nihilist tone of the original PSAs, it lacked the warmth with far too much screen time taken up with scenes of people being stabbed in the eye with pencils. Yet in spite of its many flaws (Smokey's hat isn't tan, it's *russet*) at least the film avoids the dreary pitfalls of THE BALLAD OF SMOKEY THE BEAR. In this long forgotten television special, a woefully miscast James Cagney provides the voice of Smokey's older, slightly embittered sibling Big Brother Bear, who reveals to his niece and nephew the secret origins of the iconic mascot. Contrary to his squeaky clean public image, Smokey wasn't always a staid, shovel wielding, killer of buzz. Back in the days of his youth, Smokey was the kind of reckless bear cub who'd gladly destroy a beaver's dam just to make his manipulative girlfriend smile. However, Smokey's attitude is permanently readjusted when a forest fire takes the life of his mother and leaves him in a semi-catatonic state. Complicating matters is the arrival of an escaped gorilla whose defiant littering and chilling indifference towards turtles has left the woodland creatures fearing for their lives. Can Smokey snap out of his condition long enough to trap the gorilla in a shack and watch numbly as the primate's cigar starts a fire and burns it to the ground? (Spoiler Alert: Yes.) Broadcast almost two years after the original premiere of RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER, THE BALLAD OF SMOKEY THE BEAR remains one of Rankin Bass' most depressing efforts. Not just because it's dull or that it looks quickly thrown together and cheap but also because it's unforgivably bleak. If characters aren't being burned to death they're either suffering through a loveless marriage or singing about the virtues of sticktoitiveness. Where's the joy? It certainly can't be found in the angry staccato rhythm of Cagney's voice. Granted the man was one of our finest actors but why is he playing a warm hearted bear and not a surly giraffe or an unstable, stiletto wielding emu? Yet in spite of the fact that Cagney was ill suited for the role, Arthur Rankin Jr. went out of his way to cast him, even going as far as securing a letter from Lyndon Johnson begging Cagney to fill the role. At what point do you say "fuck it" and just cast Phil Harris instead? I mean, Harris would've done it for fifty bucks and a bottle of whisky. And it wouldn't have mattered if the bottle was half-empty with a cigarette butt floating in it.

DRIFTING CLASSROOM [Hyôryu Kyôshitsu] (Video Search of Miami; 1987). Just for a moment I'd like to speak directly to the many aspiring film makers that read SHOCK CINEMA and give them a few tips that might help them during the creative process. For instance, when making your movie Make sure that a nude boy joyfully groping his mother isn't one of the first images the audience sees. Please do not close your film with a shot of the cast squinting into the sun as they wear, what appear to be, potato sacks designed by Benetton. Try not to include any scene in which an alien is urinating on a small child. However, if you *must* include a scene in which an alien is urinating on a small child, make sure that the kid isn't shown enjoying it. And finally, if for whatever reason should you accidentally commit these mistakes on film do not, under any circumstances, release it under the title DRIFTING CLASSROOM. Based on Kazuo Umezu's lovably overwrought manga, the film reveals what happens when the teachers and student body of Kobe International High School are whisked away by a tornado and transported to an alternate dimension. In this hostile and desolate new world (which may or may not be a future version of Japan) they not only must face nightly attacks from humongous crab-like monstrosities but food and water shortages as well. Yet here's the weird part, nobody seems especially bothered by this. In fact, they all seem to be downright delighted by the prospect of dying in a desert wasteland. Now obviously, I can't speak for every person that has been sucked through a time portal, but if I was trapped in a dangerous substitute universe I don't think I'd be able to rally the current survivors into singing a rousing medley of American public domain standards — mainly because I'd be far too busy wetting myself. I'd like to think that there was a method behind the madness and there might've been being that it was helmed by HAUSU's Nobuhiko Obayashi, but ultimately there wasn't. DRIFTING CLASSROOM is a slapdash and murkily photographed effort that's full of characters that aren't well developed enough to be considered stereotypes. They're more like faint descriptions of stereotypes. Terrible movies like this often raise more questions than they answer. Why are there two sets of creepy bow-tie wearing twins that speak in tandem? Why does the movie's sole black character carry around an offensive Little Black Sambo bank? Was this festive racism a part of some cruel in-joke that was accidentally caught on film? Even more disturbing is the fact that DRIFTING CLASSROOM was actually intended for American audiences. Unfortunately, the American content is either clueless (Troy Donahue could still draw a crowd in 1987, right?) or patronizing (I love the fact that characters often break into "Camptown Races" for no particular reason). I hate it when critics compare a bad movie they just saw with PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE simply because it's an obvious, dumb and usually incorrect comparison. So I won't say that Obayashi is Japan's answer to Ed Wood (duh-haw!!) but I will say there is something oddly Criswell ian about this bit of dialogue. "Kids always go to the future. That's the primary law of nature."



VIN CONSERVA; Garden City, NY.

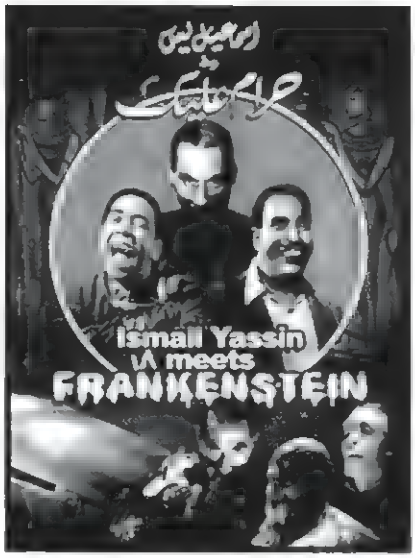
THE OUTSIDE MAN (1972). The late-'60s and early-'70s were a 'high mark' period for crime films, with BULLITT and THE FRENCH CONNECTION just two of the titles that blasted and revved their way across cinema screens worldwide. No surprise, Hollywood wasted no time cranking out scores of underworld titles — heist, gangster and private eye flicks were just a few of the sub-genres that were tapped into, but one subject, more than any other, epitomized the loner aspect of crime: the hitman. One of the most unique and exhilarating statements on the subject was this French production shot in Tinseltown, involving the termination of a chief mobster. The problem for its French assassin is getting back to his homeland alive. It begins with the classic noir scenario, as hitman Lucien Bellon (Jean Louis Trintignant) arrives in a new town (L.A.) and prepares for his newest assignment — kill mob boss Victor (noir fave Ted de Corsia, THE KILLING) — which he does rather bluntly. However something has gone very wrong, because as Lucien returns to his hotel, an attempt is made on his own life by mob mechanic Lenny (Roy Scheider). Although Lucien survives, he's stranded without his passport and belongings, in a strange country with zero contacts. A trusted friend back home, Antoine (Michel Constantin), puts him in touch with one of Antoine's old flames, Nancy Robson (the über-hot Ann-Margret) and since she's a topless barkeep with a heart of gold, she reluctantly agrees to help our tight-lipped assassin get new I.D. and tickets back home. By now we have learned that the contract was in fact paid for by Victor's greedy bastard son Alex (Umberto Orsini) and his father's wife (bikini-clad Angie Dickinson), and Lucien represents a loose end that must be put down. Ahh, but Lucien will not go quietly. Proof of that comes in an amazing car chase gunfight down Sunset Strip. One second a Jesus freak is spouting "The Word" to our bemused hero; the next, this bystander's brains are blown out thanks to the unstoppable Lenny. Lucien eventually decides to change tactics once he realize that making it home will not keep him alive, along with one more hit (after already shooting half of L.A. to bits with Lenny), which sets up a scenario at Victor's funeral that has to be seen to be believed... The first half of this film is chock full of genre faces — John Hillerman, Alex Rocco, Talia Shire, and Sidney Clute all make appearances, as do an amazing mother-son team (Georgia Engel and 11-year-old Jackie Earle Haley) who Lucien kidnaps while trying to figure out what the hell is going on. The scene of Bellon slapping bratty Eric (Haley) silly has no equal! Director Jacques Deray (BORSALINO & CO.) does a fantastic job of keeping everything off-kilter, as the already-strange 'Hollyweird' becomes an upside-down nuthouse to Lucien. Trintignant is at his EuroCool best, whether he's being shot at while driving by Tower Records or getting 'talked up' by smokin' hot harlots, and has great chemistry with Ann-M. Strange as hell, exciting from start to finish, THE OUTSIDE MAN is a true gem from a decade when gems were quite common. Seek it out at all costs!

ISLAND OF THE LOST (1967). ISLAND OF THE LOST was an Ivan Tors production, and as any cult cinema fan worth his salt knows, this means at least two things — critters and water — and this feature delivers plenty of both. Tors (who produced two '60s FLIPPER films, plus its TV-series) decided to mount a big-screen MYSTERIOUS ISLAND/SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON hybrid that was geared towards the General Audience ticket. Though not in the same league as Harryhausen or Disney, ISLAND does have its moments of '60s-style Matinee fun. This nautical tale begins rather abruptly with scientist Josh MacRae (Richard Greene) and his family — teen daughter Sharon (Sheila Welles), middle-child Stu (FLIPPER star Luke Halpin) and little sis Lizzie (Robin Mattson, a dozen years before she would be Gregg Henry's squeeze in HOT ROD). Also along for the ride are fellow scientist Judy Hawllani (THE GREEN BERETS' knockout, Irene Tsu) and research assistant/jock Gabe (Mart Hulswit), with the whole bunch heading to the South Pacific in search of a phantom island chain that the good Doctor believes has been off the charts for centuries due to magnetic disturbances. After this paper-thin science is spouted in the first ten minutes, our quest begins, with the remaining 82 minutes devoted to plenty of land and sea turbulence. Before our clan can even batten down the hatches, a 'Bermuda Triangle' moment ensues (their ship goes down like a stone during a strange storm) and the Island in question makes a life-saving appearance in the nick of time. Once on this titular Island, we enter a land of low brow Jules Verne, with Dino-ostriches and others creatures that time has decided to forget, as well as head-hunters, big spiders and even tropical romance. Judy also discovers a young King in the midst of his 'boy-to-man' ceremony. Unfortunately, since his ritual has been interrupted by outsiders, the royal heir's people will kill everyone on the Island upon their return — including the young King himself. Meanwhile, MacRae rallies the troops to build a vessel to get one and all off this isle of the dead... Though not blessed with a large budget, ISLAND moves at a brisk pace and the beastie attacks are plentiful, if not completely convincing. Greene is fine as the stoic leader, while the brawn is supplied by an enthusiastic Hulswit. Welles and Mattson show a sisterly bond during their scenes together, and although Halpin's laid-back style would have suited horse operas just fine, roles grew harder to come by after the '60s. The real gem, however, is Ms. Tsu. Truly stunning, she manages to convey sympathy and solitude (her character is an orphan seeking her own past) during scenes involving all sorts of jungle dilemmas, which is not an easy feat. Jungle adventure is just one more 'cult genre' that encompasses Tsu's amazing career — which included beach parties, spies, blaxploitation, kung-fu, and even Elvis! If your tastes run to make-shift monsters, lantern-jawed heroes and hula dancing, then ISLAND OF THE LOST delivers

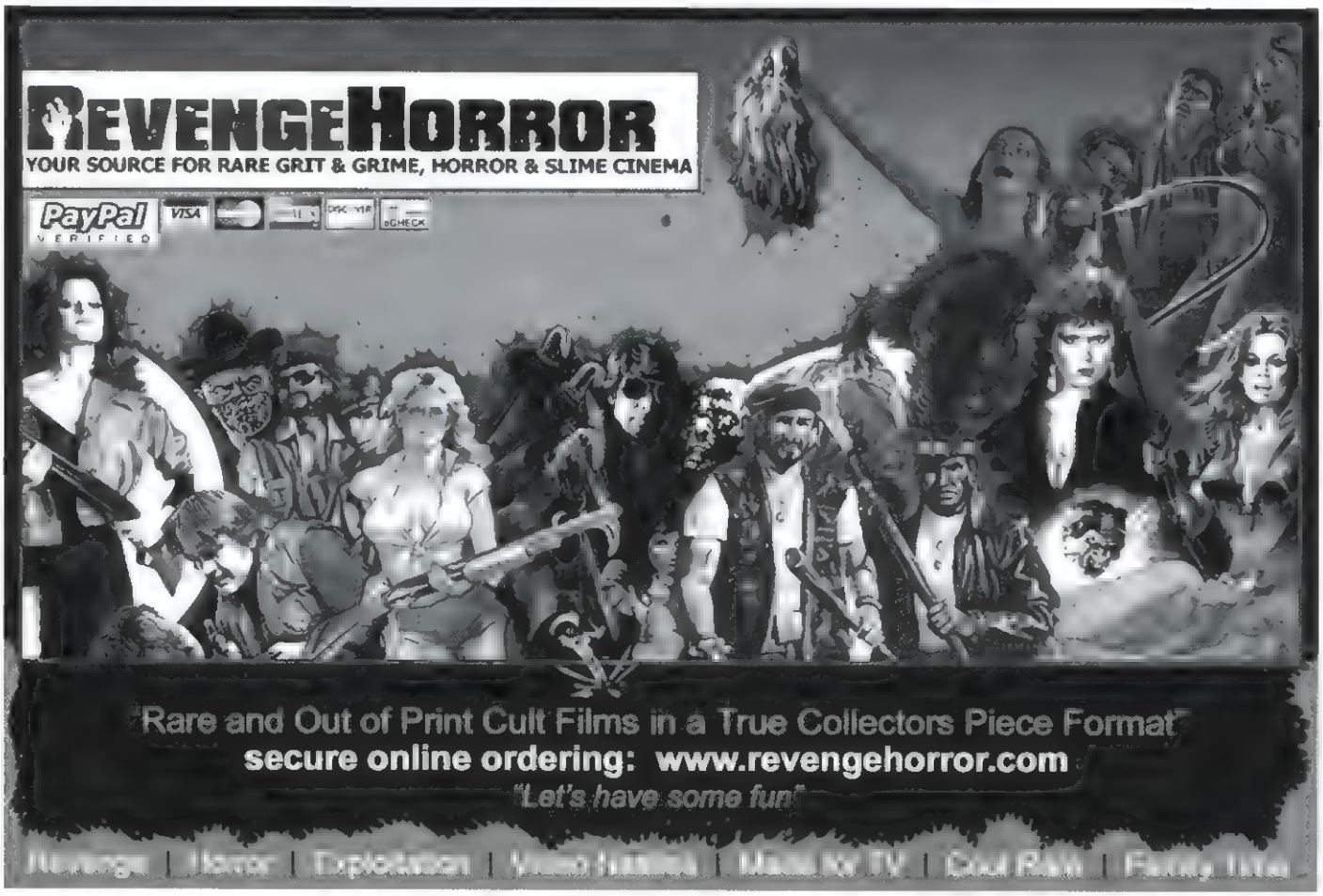
KIM NEWMAN; London, U.K.

ROBIN REDBREAST (1970). This feature length TV play owes a slight debt to ROSEMARY'S BABY, in that it features a woman who is impregnated at the design of an evil cult and finds herself cut off from all support in the middle of a paranoia-inducing conspiracy. However, its English rural setting (which is played for COLD COMFORT FARM humor as much as STRAW DOGS brutality) and *Golden Bough*-derived folklore looks forward to THE WICKER MAN, which it prefigures by building up to a gruesome ritual which is supposed to ensure a decent crop hereabouts. Though unlikely to have been a direct influence, it's also surprisingly close in plot to Thomas Tryon's novel *Harvest Home*. The BBC's long-lasting PLAY FOR TODAY (1970-87) slot was known for socially committed drama or portraits of contemporary life (from EDNA, THE INEBRIATE WOMAN to ABIGAIL'S PARTY), and there's a nugget here about the miseries of a young middle-aged single woman who can't keep up with swinging London but is marooned in the countryside when she has to live in the cottage she and her partner bought as a weekend retreat — but the series also found room for the occasional ambitious, fantasy tinged piece with a rural magical-ritual feel (like David Rudkin's PENDA'S FEN, Dennis Potter's BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS and David Pirie's RAINY DAY WOMEN). Norah Palmer (Anna Cropper), a TV script editor who is torn between with-it and past it, is clearly wound up a little too tight when she moves into her cottage, but the jovial, secretive, chatty locals — charwoman Mrs. Vigo (Freda Bamford), fount of local knowledge Mr. Fisher (Bernard Hepton) — don't help her state of mind as they keep coming round, dispensing rural lore and wisdom and obviously keeping back vital information. Norah finds half a marble on her windowsill and takes it inside, but never does find out its significance even though everyone mentions it, and happens across a muscular youth in brief briefs practicing his kickboxing in the woods. This is Edgar (Andrew Bradford), Mrs. Vigo's adopted son, whom everyone calls 'Rob' because there's always someone called Robin in the village. The locals play on Norah's loneliness (she describes herself as 'sex-starved') to get her and Edgar together, but their evening date at the cottage is a comically horrid affair — he has read up on the S.S. because he thinks being an expert on something will make him interesting to women — but, thanks to some strange circumstances involving a trapped bird and a passing poacher, they end up in bed together, and Norah's diaphragm is temporarily missing so she falls pregnant. The play segues from weird comedy (Norah's London friends, played by Julian Holloway and Amanda Walker in a riot of paisley, are just as caricatured) to uneasy suspense as the pregnant woman finds herself literally confined in her cottage, with her car sabotaged, her phone out of order (unless Edgar needs to call her) and the local bus going out of its way not to pick her up. Mrs. Vigo, clearly the matriarch of the community, and Fisher, who sneers at the occasional clergyman who doesn't know the village's ways, dispense the occasional

sinister hint as to how the ritual will be played out, but Norah — thick to the end — leaps to the wrong conclusions about who is the immediate intended sacrificial victim. Directed by James MacTaggart. Unusually, Bowen wrote two sequels featuring the sinister Vigo family which turned up over a period of ten years, one on the BBC in 1977 (A PHOTOGRAPH, another PLAY FOR TODAY, featuring Bamford, and introducing Eric Deacon as a Vigo son, Boy) and one on ITV in 1981 (DARK SECRET, a two part SUNDAY NIGHT THRILLER, with Deacon); these shows tell wildly different stories, but both find the Vigos continuing to use rural magic against townies who aren't as clever as they think they are.



HARAM ALEK / HALÂL 'ALAIK [Shame on You] (1953). The oddest thing about this low-rent Egyptian remake of ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN is that it features characters who have to look like the Frankenstein Monster, Dracula and the Wolf Man in order recreate scenes from the American film, but aren't really those characters — indeed, they're described as a mummy, a mad scientist/hypnotist and an epileptic(!), presumably on the principle that the original characters don't feature in Arabic pop culture. Most of the film depends on the hard-to-take comedy stylings of Ismail Yasseen (who has the Lou Costello role) and Abdel Fatah al Kasri (whose Bud Abbottiness extends to a pal who keeps yelling 'Abdou'!) — a team of face-pulling Egyptian comics who gurn through hoary jokes ("Can you tell me how old you are?" "Actually, I can't — because when I was born I was too young") and do a lot of open-mouthed reacting as scary people lumber at them. Initially, they work in an antiques shop, to which "the mummy of Farfour Ben Bakhtour" (Muhamad Soubay) is delivered, but heroine Afiff (Lola Sarfi) gets them a job as waiters in the home of her uncle Professor Aasim, the self-styled Invincible One ('Mameluke'), who wants to transplant Ismail's brain into the mummy's head so he'll be easier to control. Aasim has enslaved Dr Mourad, Afiff's nattily mustached boyfriend, with a hypnotic spell passed on via his ring whereby Mourad sprouts the full Chaney Jr. look when he hears a wolf howl (one does, whenever convenient, throughout). Farfour has no bandages and only resembles a mummy insofar as his face is an exaggerated mask based on Karloff's Frankenstein make up, which naturally has features which overlap with the actor's mummy look — he has a semi-Beatle wig, plus the big boots and shabby clothes familiar from the Universal monster. Aasim sports a Lugosi cloak and a hypnotic amulet, but also a devilish goatee and non-false crooked sharp teeth — he spends enough time in a coffin to recreate the opening scene of A&CmF, but is otherwise not a vampire even though he is described as looking like an "affrit." It's a smaller scale, drab-looking film, which keeps its shadows to a few laboratory scenes and mostly plays out in well-lit, unatmospheric rooms. The only clever bit of staging has the transformed Mourad stalking Ismail in a small courtyard where sheets are hung out to dry — otherwise, it's the usual eek a-monster stuff. There is one surprisingly explicit moment, as Mourad scratches Farfour's face and leaves bloody clawmarks — it might not sound like much, but it's more than Universal gave us in FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN. In the climax, it's Farfour and Aasim who plunge off a balcony to their deaths, leaving Mourad freed of his curse and eligible to settle down with the heroine (as in HOUSE OF DRACULA, which might be where the mustache comes from). The sign-off gag features the comedians spooked by the voice of the Angel of Death instead of the Invisible Man, but is the same basic idea. Like a lot of screen comics popular (we assume) in their own territories, Ismail and Abdel don't 'travel' — their mugging is too broad, their physical comedy too rote, their appearances are unprepossessing rather than amusing, and they come across as annoying, middle-aged idiots without any particular appeal. Most reference books give the original title as HARAM ALEK, but HALÂL 'ALAIK seems to be a more accurate transliteration; an alternate English language title is HAVE MERCY (and Sinister Cinema is logically calling it ISMAIL AND ABDEL MEET FRANKENSTEIN), but its major release outside Arabic countries was in France, where it was called TU LE MERITES BIEN.



MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE: An Interview With Actress LINDA HAYNES

By STEVE RYFLE

In that heyday of gritty cinema that was the seventies, Linda Haynes was both a familiar face and an elusive one After a dubious debut alongside Joseph Cotten, Cesar Romero and Richard Jaeckel in the Japanese-made undersea sci fi yarn LATITUDE ZERO (1969), Haynes went on to a series of roles showcasing both her vivid blonde beauty and her increasingly solid acting chops. In her next film, Haynes was the jealous hooker who locked talons with Pam Grier — and paid the price for it, in the form of razor cuts, a bruised face, and a tub of salad on her head — in Jack Hill's blaxploitation classic COFFY (1973).

Then, unlike some of her contemporaries, Haynes effortlessly graduated from exploitation fare to studio movies. She played mobster Jason Miller's girl in the underrated Los Angeles noir tale THE NICKEL RIDE (1974), and made memorable appearances opposite Paul Newman's Lew Harper in THE DROWNING POOL (1975) and William Devane's hook-wielding Vietnam vet in ROLLING THUNDER (1977). For the better part of the decade, Haynes was highly visible on the big and small screens, but by 1980 she'd had enough of Hollywood, so she split town and never looked back — until now, that is, when she sat down for a lengthy interview about her all-too-short acting career

SHOCK CINEMA: How did you become an actress?

Linda Haynes: I am from Miami originally. I got married when I was 16 and we moved to California. I ran away from home — climbed out the window in the middle of the night. We caught the morning flight to Vegas and got married in a little chapel I hadn't finished school, and I didn't know what to do with myself. This sounds like a made-up story, but my husband and I were walking down Beverly Drive, walking the dog, and a guy pulled up in a Cadillac. He was a silent screen star, Ben Bard He gave us his card and said, *"Do you want to come to my acting class?"* So we did, and I kept going to the class because I didn't have anything else to do My husband quit because it wasn't for him, but I continued. I was only 17 or 18 at the time

SC: When did you get to Los Angeles?

Haynes: Probably in 1965. I kept on going to the class, and eventually there was a showcase and agents were invited to watch. Out of that I got an offer to do a screen test for 20th Century Fox at the time that Dick Zanuck was the head of the studio. They still had contract players; it was the end of that era They screen tested me, and they didn't like it. Curt Conway was the acting coach over at 20th Century Fox. I was just uncomfortable, it didn't seem right, but I did the screen test because I didn't know what else to do, and people seemed to be encouraging me to do it.

SC: What didn't seem right?

Haynes: I was always uncomfortable in front of people. I was nervous, as a lot of actors are. Anyway, I did it and they didn't like it. It would be fun to see that test today.

I kept on acting and I eventually got a role in IN LIKE FLINT (1967), but you could barely recognize me because I was dressed up like a boy, and I didn't have any lines I can't remember who was in the scene All I remember is that we were in a helicopter and we had kidnapped the president off a golf course I was dressed as a boy, and then when they opened the door I took off the baseball cap and my hair came down so you could see I was a girl. That's all I can remember about it. I haven't seen it since the movie first came out This was all before I was 21, because when I did LATITUDE ZERO I had my 21st birthday in Japan

Linda Haynes in THE DROWNING POOL

SC: How did you get cast as Dr. Anne Barton in LATITUDE ZERO?

Haynes: I had an interview with Don Sharpe, the producer Then after that, I never saw him again. Warren Lewis, the executive producer, went to Japan for the filming, and he was an unusual person.

We all flew together to Japan — there was Richard Jaeckel, and I didn't really know what Joseph Cotten looked like, so I met him and his wife [Patricia Medina] for the first time on the plane. So it was the four of us actors on the plane, and Ted Sherdeman, the writer. They were all very nice people

SC: What about Cesar Romero?

Haynes He came later, because all his scenes were shot later. I never worked with him. But again, I was so uncomfortable, because I was so far away from home and everything was foreign. I hadn't learned anything about Japanese culture, so I just arrived there like a newly hatched chicken and did the best I could. It was a big strain when you don't know the language. I certainly didn't know any Japanese I didn't even learn how to say please and thank you and how to be polite, which I certainly would do now if I were going to a foreign country

Pat Medina and Joseph Cotten made me feel comfortable, because they were not bashful people. They were not dreary people, they had a great sense of humor and they were always laughing, and so was Cesar Romero.

SC: In his autobiography, Joseph Cotten tells how the American co-producers ran out of money after the shoot started, and the production almost shut down before Toho, the Japanese studio, assumed the entire cost. Was that a stressful situation?

Haynes: Not really. Joseph Cotten and Pat Medina took charge when we had the financial problems and the funds dried up on the American end, with Don Sharpe. I really wasn't very bothered by it I figured the worst that could happen was that I'd go home, which I may have secretly wanted to do anyway because it was two months over there, which was a long time.

SC: Did you get to know any of the Japanese cast members?

Haynes: I made friends with Masumi Okada and he showed me a lot of places in Tokyo, had a good time with him. He spoke English fluently and he was really friendly I went to see a production of MAN OF LA MANCHA that he was in — he did the play at night, after he was finished shooting the movie in the day I had never really liked plays because I couldn't see the actors very well. Then in Japan, when I was 21, I discovered I was near sighted because I borrowed Masumi's glasses and suddenly I could see what was going on onstage I also went to see a production of THE KING AND I in Tokyo Linda Purl was in it, she was living there at the time She was just a little girl then. And I saw a performance of WEST SIDE STORY in Japanese.

SC: The director, Ishiro Honda, was famous for the GODZILLA movies. What he like?

Haynes. He had a way of communicating with us He didn't speak any English, but when you looked him in the eye and watched his hand motions, you understood, plus we had a translator When you communicate with someone there's more than just words going on, so I was able to get the feeling of what he was trying to convey. I really liked him a lot. He was a really sensitive, gentle person and it was a real pleasure to work with him.

As far as my performance, I think they wanted me to be more lively than I was But I was really nervous, and I didn't know how to be any other way than I was I was supposed to play a doctor, but when I look at the movie now, I was kind of reserved throughout the movie and that came from being uncomfortable, but it also worked for the character, because it wouldn't be appropriate for a doctor to be bubbly, although I've known some doctors that are real characters

Haynes and Robert DoQui in Jack Hill's COFFY

SC: What did the cast do during off-hours in Tokyo?

Haynes: One night Joseph Cotten and Pat Medina and I went out to have Kobe beef. They threw these huge prawns on the grill and they were jumping — they were still alive Then very artfully they filleted the big prawn right in front of us. It was excellent. Then Toho threw a party for us, where we each were attended to a geisha, who made sure we drank a lot of sake. We sat on cushions in a big U-shape. They also had a big Christmas dinner for us We arrived in Japan in very early November and were there through the new year. My birthday is on November 4 and I remember that Toho had a 21st birthday party for me not long after we arrived They had a cake and candles, and Mr. [Tomoyuki] Tanaka and Ishiro Honda were there, along with Pat Medina and Joseph Cotten and Richard Jaeckel. The party was at the studio in a conference room. And I went out shopping with Pat Medina, that kind of thing

SC: Your costumes in LATITUDE ZERO were made of see-through plastic.

Haynes: I thought they were good But they were kind of uncomfortable because it was so hot on the sound stage with the lights, and then when you would go outside they would fog up because they were made of clear vinyl, and it was cold outside.

Masumi Okada and Haynes in LATITUDE ZERO

SC: Joseph Cotten also wrote about being stricken with a horrible flu during the shoot. He looks terrible in some scenes.

Haynes: We all got it, except for Dick Jaeckel, who for some reason didn't get it. We worked most of the time, we had to suffer it out I can t remember being absent, so they must have worked around us We were really sick.

Not only that, but I got food poisoning. We went out to a sushi bar and they kept giving me chicken I kept eating it to be polite, because that's how I was back then. Today you can t get me to eat anything if I don't like it. But this chicken was not thoroughly cooked I got so super sick. The hotel doctor had to come and give me a great big shot and an IV drip so I didn't get dehydrated.

I guess I'm one of the last people standing from that film that I know well. Pat Medina is alive, and Akira Takarada. Masumi Okada died recently.

Joseph Cotten wore a scarf in LATITUDE ZERO. He needed an ascot, but he couldn't find one anywhere. I had a scarf that was brown and orange, and he put that on. You can see him wearing it in the movie. I kept the scarf all these years, because Joseph Cotten had worn it. Recently I sent it to a fan and friend of mine in Seattle.

SC: It was a couple years before your next film. What did you do in the meantime?

Haynes: I did a lot of TV in the early seventies. I did a ROOM 222 that I had a starring role in, and a show called THIS IS THE LIFE, a religious show. I did a couple of episodes of that I did a MY THREE SONS I did an episode of OWEN MARSHALL, COUNSELOR AT LAW, and I don't remember anything about it except that I was super uncomfortable. Then somewhere along the line, maybe when I was about 24, I started going to Eric Morris' acting workshop and I learned some things that made me less uncomfortable.

SC: When you returned to film, you played Meg, one of Robert DoQui's hookers in COFFY.

Haynes: I just watched COFFY for the first time since it was released It was interesting, for God's sake (laughs) Again, I was still really uncomfortable at the time I did that movie. But watching it now, I think I did a pretty good job Back then I was so critical of myself, now I'm not quite as critical when I look back. I can always see when I did something that didn t quite seem right, but in that movie I thought I did okay That was still very early in my career, so I didn't get much of a credit. I saw Lisa Farringer — they gave her a credit and I don't think she said anything, she was just laying on the bed there Luckily I didn't have to take off my clothes like everybody else did

Bob DoQui was very nice to work with. Pam Grier I don't remember; I suppose she must have been nice to me because I don't remember anything bad about her It's been a long, long time.

SC: Your character got into a nasty catfight with Pam, who concealed razor blades in her wig. You got cut up and beaten pretty badly.

Haynes: I remembered the razor blades, but I'd forgotten that I had salad dumped on me My hair got real greasy.

SC: You often played women who were victims in some way or another. How did you feel about that?

Haynes I just took what I could get. Maybe they thought I fit that kind of role If I had my choice, I'd rather do things like Katherine Hepburn did, but I took what I could get. I rejected certain things — they gave me a chance to be in THE BIG BIRD CAGE at AIP but I turned it down because there was nudity or something that I didn't want to do.

SC: You had a big role in THE NICKEL RIDE, a film that has virtually disappeared. It was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

Haynes That was a really neat movie to work on. Robert Mulligan directed it, and Eric Roth, who wrote it, was there. We all had a really good time. That was a really comfortable movie for me to do, because by that time I had gone to acting workshops and I think by then I had been accepted as a lifetime member of the Actors Studio, which is probably the biggest feat I ever accomplished I did a scene for Lee Strasberg just once, and I got into the Actors Studio on the first try, which is super rare I had done some work at the Actors Studio, and I had tools, a craft, by then

Mulligan was great to work with He was an Academy Award winner and he really knew how to explain just what he wanted. Jason Miller and I had a lot of fun. We worked up in Big Bear, California for quite a while, and the location was great. We'd work during the day and then there was just one place to go out to dinner at night, so we got to know each other very well.

SC: Then you did another somewhat forgotten caper film, THE DROWNING POOL with Paul Newman.

Haynes. Newman was really nice I was probably a little intimidated to work with him because I hadn't worked with somebody that big before. We rehearsed a little bit before we did the scene, so we got to know one another a little bit I just did a few scenes with him, when I met him in a bar and he comes home with me, to my trailer. The scene worked pretty well. It was cute

Paul Newman had Mario Andretti's backup driver chauffeuring him around, because as you know he was into racing We did the scene in the trailer — we filmed it in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Then we had to go back to the motel where we were staying Newman had this driver driving him, and he asked me if I wanted to ride back with him, so I said OK We were in the back seat of the car, and Andretti's driver and his wife were in the front. We were drinking French wine in the back seat and all of a sudden I looked out the window and I saw the cars they looked like they were stopped, but they were going 55 mph (during the gas crunch). We were flying in that car. I didn't see the speedometer, but we were going at least double what the other cars were going. That was an adventure

Haynes and William Devane in ROLLING THUNDER

SC: Perhaps your best role was in ROLLING THUNDER. What was that experience like?

Haynes: Bill Devane wanted certain things his way, and John Flynn, the director, wanted things his way, so they locked horns a little bit. But for me, the shoot went smoothly and I enjoyed what I was doing We shot it in San Antonio all the scenes that looked like Mexico were done down there. In those days I was able to stay up and have a good time, there was a lot of partying going on. You slept a few hours, got up and went to work again

With Jason Miller in THE NICKEL RIDE

SC: There was a lot of physical action in your role. You were firing a shotgun, and you wrestled with Devane, who was wearing a metal hook where his hand had been cut off in a garbage disposal by thugs.

Haynes I had never shot a gun before. I had good aim, because I hit the log that I was aiming for But I didn't expect the kick that I got, and I had some bruises from it And then fighting with Bill Devane in that field, that was fun.

We had a camper that we took on the road, and the trailers of course. I remember spending time in the camper to stay out of the heat. Devane called me "greasy" because my face was always greasy because of the heat. But I wasn't so concerned because I figured my character was supposed to look like that.

Devane thought that my character ought to come with him in the end for the shootout. He thought that would have been more logical But the story didn't go that way, so I got left in the motel.

They said that when ROLLING THUNDER first came out, they showed what came out of the garbage disposal when they put Bill Devane's hand in it. And the people in the theater got sick and they had to clean up the theater, so they edited that out. The people couldn't take it. Today it would probably be left in

SC: You finally got a leading role in the low-budget HUMAN EXPERIMENTS (1980), playing a country singer subjected to various tortures by a demented prison scientist. This was perhaps the most exploitative part you'd done. What appealed to you about it?

Haynes: I liked the range of things that I had to do in it. [Director] Greg Goodell, who has since gone on to be a writer or director for TV, that was really the first movie that he ever did outside of documentaries.

SC: You had hundreds of insects dumped on you.

Haynes: They were real insects. [Greg Goodell] was using a hand-held camera to get the full impact of the creepy crawlers The "bug wrangler" was in the rafters dumping the bugs from garbage cans. There were thousands! That started getting freaky. I said, "You've got one more chance to do your thing, but do it, because I don't want to do that again." When you get that much creepy stuff all over you, that's not comfortable When the bugs were placed on me — they put a scorpion, a tarantula, some African ants — they placed them on me, and that was OK because I knew where they were. I wasn't afraid of getting bit because they put little styrofoam balls in their mouths or on their pinschers I told them they couldn't use cockroaches on me, though, because I'm from Florida and I think they're gross (laughs) When you feel those bugs all over you it really got freaky. It worked out OK. I'm surprised when I look back and realize I did that. How did I have the guts to do that? Anyway, they used crickets.

SC: You had a small part in BRUBAKER (1980), starring Robert Redford. You played the girlfriend of a redneck prison official, but you didn't get to do much, unfortunately.

Haynes: I think BRUBAKER was the worst thing I ever did in terms of my performance. I couldn't get a handle on the role. All I did was open a door and stand there topless. I did two versions, one for TV with no nudity, and the other for theaters.

SC: Why did you do nudity if you weren't comfortable with it?

Haynes: I guess I just did it because that's what the director, Stuart Rosenberg, told me to do. In HUMAN EXPERIMENTS, I didn't like it but again I did it because it was written in the script You can't say, "I'll do this movie," after you've read the script and you see there's nudity in it, then refuse to do it later after they've spent all that time and money filming. That doesn't seem honorable. So I did it. It's not the end of the world. Most actresses at that time appeared nude in something. It was the 1970's

SC: You seemed to get along with most everyone. Were there any people who were difficult to work with?

Haynes: Yeah, when I did an episode of OWEN MARSHALL: COUNSELOR AT LAW. I can't remember who the director was but he was a real nervous guy and he yelled a lot. Yelling is the kiss of death for an actor, especially if you're a greenhorn who doesn't know what you're doing. So it made for an uncomfortable situation. But fortunately it was short lived; I was only there for two days or something like that. But most directors never did that Everybody was really nice to me, nobody ever tried anything. You hear about the casting couch, but that never happened. I was married for most of the time I was in Hollywood, or living with someone, so that didn't happen to me. But I just got kind of tired of it, and I felt the whole Hollywood scene was unhealthy for me.

SC: Unhealthy in what way?

Haynes: The illusions of the business, and then to find out about the dark side underneath. I was good friends with Sandra Dee's mother [Mary Douvan], very good friends I saw her every day, and I saw Sandy probably most of those days. Her mom would go shopping for Sandy, and we would go to Sandy's house. Sandy did an article for *People* magazine in which she said she'd been molested by her step-father That shakes me up to this day, because Sandra Dee was a real icon And I would hear about this step-father every day from her mother, saying how great he was. It got to the point where I got tired of hearing about him But no mention was ever made about [the molestation]. Then when Sandy came out with that article in *People* magazine, it just made my skin crawl. I felt so bad because Sandy was living as a shut-in at that point She didn't want to go out and her mother had to do her shopping. She was

just a couple years older than me. She would have champagne in the morning and I would try to drink with her. Eventually I learned how to drink much better, but this was when I was about 21, about the time I went to Tokyo for LATITUDE ZERO. It's a strange business. But people are no more weird in Hollywood than they are in other places, I guess.

SC: Around the time you did HUMAN EXPERIMENTS, a newspaper columnist wrote a story about you, saying you were married to a rich guy who bought you Rolls Royces.

Haynes: Yeah, that was Saul Zukerman, my second husband We lived on Franklin Avenue in Hollywood, which at one time was "ambassador row." We lived in Preston Sturges' old house. It was so huge, it was divided into four pieces. Saul was the broker for most of the car washes all over Southern California, so he did well and I didn t have to work if I didn't want to, but I did want to. That made it easy. If I couldn't get a job, it wasn't like I was starving. I drove a 1963 Bentley and he had a Rolls.

SC: Why did you stop acting in the early 1980's?

Haynes I didn't like the path that I was going down. I had acted for about 15 years, and there was a lot of booze and drugs around I wanted to have a baby; I didn't want to go on like that. Greg Goodell and his wife had had a baby and I think that inspired me. So after I did the TV movie, GUYANA TRAGEDY: THE STORY OF JIM JONES (1980) I decided to change everything I moved to Vermont, bought a farm, got married and pregnant Then that relationship soon fell apart, so I ended up in Miami and raised my son here in Southern Florida, and here I learned to do what I do today. I'm a legal assistant in a law firm and we do medical malpractice defense. I've been here in Florida and the Bahamas ever since.

Covered with bugs in HUMAN EXPERIMENTS

SC: You have a distinctive way of speaking, which was one of your acting trademarks. Is that something you cultivated, or is it natural?

Haynes· People have told me that they've been dozing off late at night, and my voice comes on the late-night TV and it woke them up. So my voice is pretty distinctive. I have twin sisters, Yvonne and Yvette, who were models — they did the cover of *Sports Illustrated* around 1973. They were called the Sylvander Twins. They did one movie, ALMOST SUMMER (1978) When I hear myself, my voice sounds just like my sister, Yvonne. My first language was Swedish, which I still speak whenever I can. So that might have something to do with the way I speak. I grew up in Miami, so maybe I sound like a New Yorker. I guess it's a unique mixture.

SC: Will you ever act again?

Haynes A few years ago Quentin Tarantino's office called me, and I didn't know who he was at that time. I don't watch movies that much, so I didn't know about him at the time. They wanted me to try for a role in an episode of E.R. that Tarantino was going to direct, but at that point I didn't want to do it so I declined.

Then Vincent Gallo called me and said, *"I've always admired you work, etc."* I didn't know who he was either, (laughs) Then I went out to California to be interviewed for the DVD release for HUMAN EXPERIMENTS. Well, Vincent ended up conducting the interview But they just let the camera keep rolling from the moment he arrived We were standing up, with our arms crossed, just talking and then finally the interview started and he did most of the talking — but they had the camera on me! Very strange. (laughs) Usually they cut back and forth or they show both people at once, but that didn't happen Then Vincent said, *"I want to edit it."* As far as I know, it still hasn't been edited, and the DVD hasn't come out yet

After I had my son, he became more important to me than anything else. Making movies was an important chapter in my life but not the most important I think it would be fun to act again, but that part of my life may be over with for good. I'm glad people remember me and are interested enough to read this interview. Ω

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FROM CHEERLEADING TO DAYTIME TV: An Interview With JENNIFER ASHLEY

By CALUM WADDELL

B-movie maiden Jennifer Ashley has had a wide and varied career: starting off in a number of bit roles, which includes a part in Brian De Palma's classic glam-musical PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE (1974), before earning her leading lady stripes in the likes of THE POM POM GIRLS (1976) and the British-made ALIEN tie in INSEMINOID (1981). However, the performer's most notable, mainstream success came with her talk show ASHLEY'S CLOSET, which finalized her move out of B-cinema — something she admits she was not sorry to leave behind. Nevertheless, the actress has left an indelible dent on the screen for any lover of seventies schlock and typically proves to be an alluring, captivating beauty, even when given the barest chance to light up the screen. Yet, irregardless of whether she was playing the sultry, but shy, Laurie in Joseph Ruben's THE POM POM GIRLS, or essaying a bit part as a hardened prison inmate in 1983's CHAINED HEAT, Ashley usually handled her scenes with admirable enthusiasm.

When SHOCK CINEMA catches up with the actress it is on the eve of the DVD release of THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS (1974), for which she was happy to give the company's releaser (Dark Sky) an on-screen chat. Now busy with her own clothing business, SHOCK CINEMA spoke to the starlet during her lunch break and found her happy to reminiscence about her exploitation movie past.

SHOCK CINEMA: The earliest credit I can find for you is on 1973's YOUR THREE MINUTES ARE UP. Did you do any work in films or commercials before then?

Jennifer Ashley: Yes I did, but we are going back a long time now. (laughs) Here is what happened: I was working in the music business when I first came to California. Back then I was based in San Francisco, not Los Angeles, and I was discovered walking down the street by some agent. That is honestly how it all began for me. This guy just walked up to me and asked me if I had done any acting — and then he introduced me to a man who did television commercial workshops and he was also a photographer. Well, he took me on and the acting jobs started from there but, to me, performing seemed like a good idea because I had done a whole number of plays back when I was in high school. I was always into drama — and I had a lot of that in my young life anyway (laughs) — so it seemed oddly fitting to me. I thought to myself, "I am a chameleon and a ham anyway, so why should I not do some of that on the screen?" So my first job was not on YOUR THREE MINUTES ARE UP. It was on some other movies. It was just little parts but, you know, I was grateful for whatever I got handed. Here I was, this girl from Philadelphia who lived with her parents all her life, got married and then I went to California, got discovered and got offered movie parts.

The very first thing I did was as an extra in a movie called THE CANDIDATE (1972) with Robert Redford, which was very exciting. That was shot in San Francisco and then I did a non union film called THE TOURNAMENT, which was supposed to take place in medieval times. I played a princess and they tied me to this tree for hours and hours — it was insane, just this little low budget film. However, I was working in movies and I didn't care how small these parts were — I was at least getting some kind of start in the industry...

Jennifer Ashley in THE POM POM GIRLS

SC: You were also screen tested for AMERICAN GRAFFITI, right?

Ashley: That is right — I was tested for AMERICAN GRAFFITI. I went in and read for the role of Debbie, which eventually went to Candy Clark. But the same casting people decided I would be right for a small role in YOUR THREE MINUTES ARE UP, so that is how that one happened. Now that was a fun movie to make and, again, although it was not a big role it led on to other things. It was because of that movie that I ended up being in PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE...

SC: I want to talk about PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE in a short while, but before that you did THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS for director John Peyser. What was that like for you?

Ashley: Arthur Marks produced THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS and he was such a great guy to work with — as was John. It was a good team. I remember when I first saw the movie I thought it was much better than I expected it to be. You know, it was not my aspiration to do a movie like that but I wanted to work. However, they wanted me to take my clothes off for THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS and that was not something I wanted to do a lot of — if at all. (laughs) I remember being very embarrassed when I had to strip, very "oh my God, do I have to?" And the gawking cameraman and stuff, the crew looking at me .. I had to ask them to go away so I could take some time to deal with it. That took a lot of courage for me, to take my clothes off, but when you see it today it looks so tame. Nowadays you see everything, right?

SC: Of course, things have become a lot more liberal. THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS is now being re-released on DVD. Considering you sound a bit embarrassed, are you still happy to see it out there?

Ashley: Oh yeah, I want all my films out there. Don't get me wrong, I was having a lot of fun back then acting in these low budget movies. These little movies paved the way for my TV talk show in Los Angeles, which I hosted for many years, so I have no complaints. And I did a movie about a year ago called FRANKIE D (2007), where I play a newscaster. So it is nice to be remembered!

SC: From a cheap exploitation cheapie like THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS to your brief appearance in PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE — it must be something to have worked with Brian De Palma, right?

Ashley: You know, I remember meeting Brian De Palma for the first time. I remember that vividly. We came in to audition and he told me almost right away that I had obtained the part of a groupie. I was happy, even though I had no idea what I was expected to do. (laughs) Well, we got brought in, a bunch of us, and we all had to lie on a giant waterbed, it was an odd thing... But, yes, it was fun — although I felt a bit uncomfortable doing that one too...

SC: Why was that?

Ashley: Well, because it was a bunch of young girls lying on a waterbed together. (laughs) But I did look good in that scene. I have to say that. It was embarrassing but it was a good movie and when it came out it was a big film...

SC: How do you remember Brian De Palma?

Ashley: He was horny. (laughs) How is that? That is all I can say about him. He was in a fantasy because he was around all of these beautiful young girls. But he was very nice and very creative and he is a great director. He has gone on to prove that over and over again.

SC: NIGHTMARE CIRCUS (1974) gave you a bigger role. It was also your first outright horror flick. I imagine this ultra-low budget scary film was a big leap away from the comparative elegance of PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE...

Ashley: You could say that. (laughs) We filmed that as TERROR CIRCUS if I remember rightly and then they changed the name. I had to drive myself out to Palmdale every day for that movie. I recall that one evening I got caught in a rainstorm coming back from the set and my window wipers did not work and it was a good two-hour drive home. And I was always cold shooting that film. (laughs) We had our little trailers but we mainly shot the movie in outside locations and I had this small, weird, tribal outfit on. But as long as I was working I was enjoying it and, yes, that was a much bigger role for me. Plus, working with Alan Rudolph was great.

SC: That was only his second film as a director I believe...

Ashley: Oh, Alan was just the best on TERROR CIRCUS. One of the producers of the movie started out directing it too and it was horrible! Thankfully, they brought Alan in to replace him and he totally turned that movie around. He met us all, individually, in our trailers before the shoot began and asked us what we wanted to do with our parts... To me, that shows you what a great, considerate director he is.

SC: You got your first big, meaty role in 1976's teen cheerleading comedy THE POM POM GIRLS. Now that was quite a big success when it first came out, wasn't it?

Ashley: Let me tell you this... I got so many offers to do low budget movies after THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS came out in theaters. I don't think THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS was a huge hit but it certainly made money and people saw me in it. But after THE POM POM GIRLS it went crazy for me! With that one it was just insane (laughs). Sometimes I had to turn down a whole bunch of offers. It was mainly the same type of films — cheerleaders and stuff... that was a big genre back then. Films like THE POM POM GIRLS were playing at drive in cinemas and making a whole lot of money. Young people flocked to that film...

SC: Did you get to see the movie with a drive-in audience?

Ashley: Well, I liked to see the audience react to the films I was in so I would always try and see them in theatres rather than at the drive-in. But I went to the Cannes Film Festival with THE POM POM GIRLS and it was crazy out there too! It went down so well in France and I began to be recognized on the streets of Cannes, which was quite funny.

SC: Had you seen any of the cheerleading movies that came out before THE POM POM GIRLS such as THE CHEERLEADERS and THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS?

Ashley: No, I had never seen any of these. I did not even know about them at the time. However, when I was interviewed for THE POM POM GIRLS I knew it was going to be a worthwhile project. I did not know that it was following in the footsteps of other things. I knew it was going to be good, though, because of the director, Joe Ruben. He is a very talented guy and he wrote a very funny script. Plus, they had Robert Carradine attached to it and there was a special chemistry between the four leads in the movie. But even though I knew it was going to be entertaining, I didn't expect it would be a big hit.

With Michael Mullins in THE POM POM GIRLS

SC: Your character Laurie is the silent sex bomb in THE POM POM GIRLS. How did this resemble your personality at the time, if at all?

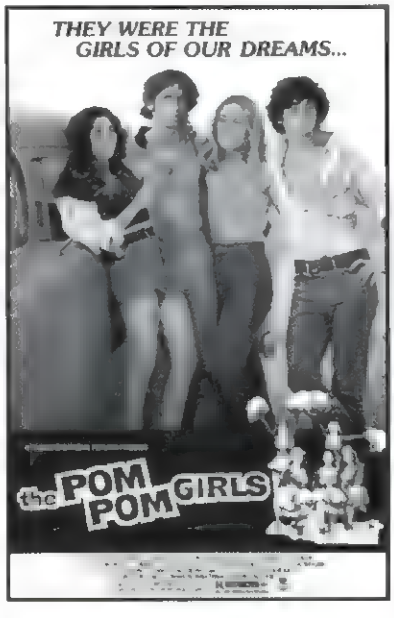
Ashley: Yeah, Laurie was the virgin cheerleader and I was actually like that in high school. She was shy and innocent. She went with the crowd but was always soft spoken and that was what I was like too. The part was not much of a stretch for me at all. However, I am not one for swimming in the ocean, but we had to do that in one sequence, and I think you can tell — if you look closely — that I am not really enjoying myself. (laughs) I also had to roll down a hill, for what reason I cannot remember, and I didn't want to do that either. It was this big dirty hill, you know? But for years afterwards we were still hanging out together — the cast of that film was very, very close. It was a great time in my life.

SC: Had you been a cheerleader at high school?

Ashley: Yeah, I was a cheerleader back then.

SC: Did you remember any of your old moves for the film?

Ashley: No, they had us practice all of that from scratch. (laughs) Some captain of a local cheerleading squad came and taught us everything. I was taking dance classes by the time of THE POM POM GIRLS though. In fact, I think that might have helped to win me the role.



SC: You mentioned being surprised by the film's success. When did you first realize it was becoming a hit?

Ashley: Well, everybody loved it at the first screenings I went to so I sort of knew then.. There was so much laughter and an insane amount of clapping. Dustin Hoffman actually saw it and called me in to read for a part and Bruce Springsteen told people at his concerts to go and see it. I look back at that now and realize how funny it all was.

SC: Do you see films like THE POM POM GIRLS as the father of similarly sexy, and lewd, teen comedies such as PORKY'S, SCREWBALLS and AMERICAN PIE?

Ashley: Yes, I do. I think we represented the beginning of these movies. It set the precedent in a lot of way. I think even the Brat Pack films, like ST. ELMO'S FIRE, owe something to THE POM POM GIRLS.

SC: Where did you shoot THE POM POM GIRLS?

Ashley: The beach that we are all cheerleading on during the opening credits was in Malibu, and it was beautiful, and then we worked at Chatsworth High School for the rest of it. We did a lot of the scenes in the locker room, and inside the classrooms, just at a normal high school. Joe Ruben let us be very creative. For instance, I love apples. I eat a lot of apples, and I asked him if I could do that onscreen — just because I related to the character and wanted to bring some of my own ticks to her. That is also why she chews gum. He went for all of that. That was the first movie where I was allowed to bring my own ideas to the table.

SC: Your POM POM GIRLS co-star, the cult starlet Rainbeaux Smith, had also been in THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS and was beginning to make a name for herself back then. Can you share some memories of her?

Ashley: I remember finding out Rainbeux Smith died and I was so shocked. We never really kept in touch. But who knew about her problems back then? I didn't know. She was like a little baby. She was very innocent. I did keep up with a lot of the cast though — but I haven't seen Lisa Reeves or Susan Player for a long time. I don't know if they are even working anymore. We used to have parties at my house back then and Bobby Carradine's entire family would show up — I got to know them all.

SC: After THE POM POM GIRLS you starred in the low budget JAWS rip-off TINTORERA! (1977). What convinced you to get involved in this?

Ashley: I signed with a big agency before TINTORERA! and they were the ones who decided to put me in that movie. I think it was because Susan George was the lead so they felt it had some prestige. I was flown out to the tropics, we worked near Cancun for a couple of months and I really enjoyed that part of it. I mean, can you imagine being paid to go on a vacation for two months? When I came home I felt like I had culture shock. (laughs) TINTORERA! was not the hardest movie to do but, once more, I was a little embarrassed — and this time it was because I had to play a drunken hippie. (laughs)

SC: Do you remember much about the film's release in the US?

Ashley: I don't know how it did in the States, but the reviews were horrible. They said it was a rip-off of JAWS — which it was — but, hey, I liked it anyway

SC: Can you talk about TINTORERA!'s director, Rene Cardona Jr.? He was quite an established B-movie maverick by the time you began working with him.

Ashley I never even knew that! Rene was great, a very sweet man. I adored him. He did very well with the resources he had on that film. You know, I worked with Blake Edwards on THE MAN WHO LOVED WOMEN (1983) and, in all honesty, give me Rene Cardona any day. (laughs) He gave me so much more to do than Blake Edwards. When I did THE MAN WHO LOVED WOMEN I went up to Blake Edwards and asked him for some motivation and he said, *"Just do whatever you feel is right because you are the actress and that is your job."*

Laura Lyons, Hugo Stiglitz and Ashley in TINTORERA!

SC: GUYANA: CRIME OF THE CENTURY (1979) saw you acting alongside the likes of Gene Barry and Stuart Whitman in an attempt to exploit the Jonestown Massacre...

Ashley That got horrible reviews too. (laughs) They said it looked as if they had got their stars from a 1958 casting sheet We were in Mexico City for that one and they built this exact replica of Jonestown. It was very eerie. I played a communist in it. I was Jim's mistress — a girl called Anna Kazan — and before we began shooting The *L.A Times* did this huge expose on her so I got to read a lot about her. In the article it mentioned how she followed Jones right to the horrible end, so I tried to draw a little bit on that kind of insanity. I got to give people the kool aid in the movie (laughs) That was the eeriest thing because after we did that sequence I went back to my room and there was an enormous earthquake in Mexico City. Very scary. The people were so nice though. The Mexican people are the warmest, nicest souls. But that film... Yeah, it was a very eerie experience.

Jennifer Ashley in INSEMINOID

SC: Having met Norman J. Warren, who directed you in INSEMINOID, he seems like the perfect gentleman. Was that also the case when you worked with him?

Ashley: Yes, I adored Norman. He was so easy to work with and just the nicest guy. He worked us hard on INSEMINOID, though, and it was freezing cold in these Chislehurst caves that we shot the film in. We were in London, and that was the best part of making that movie I wanted to see London and I got to stay there for two months. It was one of the perks of being an actress. (laughs) We were driving an hour out of London every day to work in these caves in the English countryside and it was so cold. We all had to wait around to film our scenes and it was just ice cold But we were being paid so you didn't complain. (laughs)

SC: INSEMINOID was an obvious rip-off of ALIEN. Were you aware of that when you began production?

Ashley: No, because I had never seen ALIEN! So it all felt very original to me. I believe in aliens but never saw the movie. (laughs)

SC: How do you feel INSEMINOID holds up today?

Ashley: Oh yeah, it is great My husband has watched that film quite a few times and my kids love it, even if it is very gory. We even won some kind of award for the soundtrack at one movie festival. They had this great, eerie music on INSEMINOID, which I thought was very atmospheric, and I still have the original album. I wonder if that is worth anything on eBay..

SC: INSEMINOID has since become something of a cult film, but it was not a big hit when it came out. As a low budget UK production, how did it go down in the US?

Ashley Universal bought the movie and they thought it was going to be this huge success and, sadly, that wasn't the case But it did play everywhere when it first came out. I think the distribution for it was quite strong.

SC: Nevertheless, INSEMINOID led you on to THE MAN WHO LOVED WOMEN with Blake Edwards...

Ashley: I played Burt Reynolds' mother when he was six in THE MAN WHO LOVED WOMEN Of course, that meant I never got to meet Burt. (laughs) Like I mentioned earlier, though, Blake Edwards was nice but he just didn't give me any direction. His feeling was that actors are hired to act I played a hooker mom and that gave me something to work with. You know — why is she a hooker in the 1940's? Maybe she is just trying to support her kid and this is all there is but, with the time period, she needs to be secretive. I was thinking all of this stuff. I tried to bring at least something to my roles, you know?

SC: You had a small role in 1983's women-in-prison throwback CHAINED HEAT, with fellow B-movie maidens Linda Blair, Tamara Dobson and Sybil Danning. It is a pity, considering the cast, that the end result was not more explosive...

Ashley: Oh God, I forgot all about CHAINED HEAT! That was another weird location. We shot in an empty prison but I was going through a divorce, which had me angry, and I had to play this inmate with temper issues so that worked out well (laughs) I was a friend of Linda Blair's in that movie and, yeah, it was interesting enough. It was a hard shoot though and very low budget but I thought I did a good job. They let me do my own hair and my character was called Grinder, which is quite cool (laughs) She was a wild one and quite good fun to play.

SC: After that you largely disappeared from movies to host your own hit talk show ASHLEY'S CLOSET. Were you fed up with the business?

Ashley: Actually, ASHLEY'S CLOSET just took up all of my time (laughs) I worked on getting my own guests and the show took off for me so I went with it. I was also doing commercials and I just didn't want to do B-movies anymore. It didn't feel suitable ME, MYSELF AND I (1992) was the last film I did and I honestly did not feel sad leaving that all behind.

SC: All the same, do you have a favorite role from your career?

Ashley I loved doing a movie called TOWING (1978), which we have not spoken about. It is not so famous, but I am very proud of it. Maura Smith, the director, let me improvise a lot on that and I got to work with my friends Joe Montegna and Sue Lyon. I had a blast and I really enjoyed myself. But I have to mention THE POM POM GIRLS just because it was very successful and really got me out there. INSEMINOID was great too because it has become such a cult classic.

SC: So tell us, what do you do now?

Ashley: I have a clothing company called Hippie Inc I have a web site — www.hippieinc.com and I sell women's clothing and have a whole line of products But I also did a part in this film with Todd Bridges called FRANKIE D You know, you never lose acting It is always there and if I got offered a really good part then I would definitely do it. I still have an agent but right now I am totally dedicated to my clothing company, and I have two little girls, so I have a busy home life But, like I said earlier, it is great to know that people are still watching, and enjoying, these old films. Ω

(With thanks to Elijah Drenner for making this interview possible)

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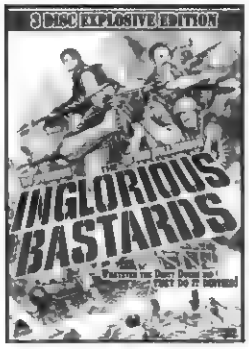
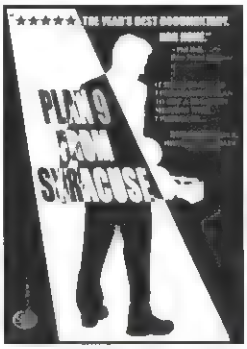
DVDementia

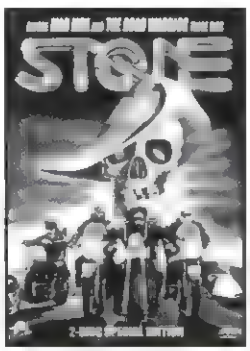
Set in WWII-era France, director Enzo Castellari's 1978 action adventure **THE INGLORIOUS BASTARDS (Severin)** is a EuroTrash DIRTY DOZEN knock-off, centered on a motley group of Allied deserters, criminals and miscreants, who're attacked by Krauts and find themselves on the run behind enemy lines. Bo Svenson stars as Lt. Yeager, Fred Williamson (sporting his trademark '70s sideburns, 'stache and stogie) is Canfield, plus there's a long-haired scam artist, a racist douchebag (Peter Hooten), a whiny coward, even an escaped German private. These misfits initially plan to hightail it to Switzerland, and if they manage to mow down scads of Germans in the process, all the better! Soon they're ducking bombs, captured by the S.S., dressing up as Nazis to sneak through checkpoints, and (best of all) stumbling across a pond full of skinny-dipping Fraulein cuties. . who promptly pull out machine guns! Ah, topless chicks with automatic weapons. Now *that's* entertainment! Eventually, French resistance fighters mistake our guys for a squad of American heroes, so off they go on a top secret mission full of outlandish daring-do — including a blown-up bridge, motorcycle stunts, a hijacked train, and a German super-weapon — as these 'bastards' have one last chance at redemption. Although Bo seems a bit aloof, Fred is always fun to watch, and this is a bullshit-free B-movie that hits all the necessary bases. Sure, it's nothing original, but the pace rarely slows and there's plenty of macho swagger, breezy humor and bullet-riddled corpses along the way. DVD extras include an enjoyably-rambly, 38-minute conversation between Castellari and longtime-BASTARDS-fan Quentin Tarantino, a return to the film's original locations, and a new 75-minute making-of doc, featuring vivid recollections by Enzo, Fred, Bo, and others — from the Italian government confiscating their fake guns, to blast happy FX expert "Bombardone." Plus there's a bonus CD with Francesco De Masi's score.



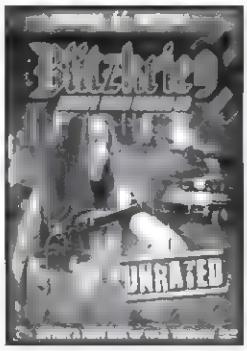
Crazy artists are always the stuff of compelling drama, and **PLAN 9 FROM SYRACUSE (SRS Cinema; www.b-movie.com)** does not disappoint. In fact, it's one of the most original and fascinating documentaries I've seen all year. Throughout his life, Ryan Dacko has had one dream: to be an honest to goodness filmmaker. In 2004, he scraped together enough cash (via a graveyard shift job) for a DIY feature entitled AND I LIVED, but the guy had even bigger plans. He came up with a preposterous stunt — *running* from his Central New York hometown of Syracuse to Hollywood, California (*only* 2950 miles), posting his progress on-line, amassing a fan following, and once he arrives at his destination, convincing movie producer Mark Cuban to invest in Ryan's next project. This amazing, feature-length film chronicles Dacko's seemingly-impossible journey on foot, followed by a support van with his cameraman and driver. Mind you, Dacko had NO professional track experience, and this scheme would have him running 10 hours per day for over three months! We follow him through crappy weather, traffic, flat tires, dead batteries, losing two drivers, tonsilitis, running weeks behind schedule, and just when his voyage seems as bleak as it could get, ol' man winter kicks in. But Ryan never gives up, even after reading negative feedback from Cuban — the Tinseltown hot shot this whole nutty plan is targeting! I'm usually somewhat cynical when it comes to half-baked ideas such as this, but even if you think Dacko is a bloody lunatic, it's impossible not to respect his determination and brutal honesty during diary moments, as the guy struggles with deteriorating health, lack of money and fear of failure. Surreal moments of beauty also permeate the second half as it begins to resemble an indie, 21st century BURDEN OF DREAMS, with Dacko making his way across frozen New Mexico, wearing out five pairs of running shoes, taking a misguided detour into Las Vegas, and putting a bittersweet end to his epic journey. Although Dacko never achieved his dream — a high-powered Hollywood 'meeting' — his wrongheaded quest made one hell of a film! The DVD includes a director's commentary and a final dismissive comment from Mark Cuban (who seems like a major cockwad).



Without question, 1974's Australia-lensed **STONE (Severin)** is one of the top outlaw biker movies of all time. It's an exciting blast of gritty action, brutality and screw-authority attitude, and also delivers a novel twist on the usual cycle ramas, since this time around the bikes are the ones on the receiving end of the violence. When a hitman involved in a political assassination gets worried that The Gravediggers cycle club can I.D. him, he begins murdering them, one by one — via drowning, explosions, decapitation, and acid-filled arrows! Shaggy-haired cop Stone (Ken Shorter) convinces their leader Undertaker (Sandy Harbutt, who also directed) to let him ride with 'em, and with their honorary member in tow, these "animals" race around town, get high, rumble with a rival gang, and mess with the uptight public. Meanwhile, this killer has connections to local bigwigs and some other contrived hokum. There are plenty of cheap thrills along the way, but what makes the film click is its respect for the gang's camaraderie, loyalty and rebellious lifestyle. In addition to scene-stealing Hugh Keays-Byrne (MAD MAX) as tripped out Toad, the solid supporting cast includes Rebecca Gilling as a foxy biker mama, Vincent Gil as one-eyed Dr. Death, and Helen Morse (PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK) as Stone's girlfriend. Shorter is the only weak link, since his character is such a wishy-washy, law-abiding putz to the core. The 2-disc set contains a trailer, make-up tests, making-of featurette, and a director-narrated slideshow. Best of all, it includes 1999's **STONE FOREVER**, an amazing, 62 minute documentary on the film's 25th anniversary (when over 30,000 motorcyclists descended on Sydney to celebrate). Most of the film's cast and crew reunited for the event, including Harbutt, Shorter, Morse, Keays-Byrne, and more — all reveling in how this grubby hi'l labor of love was snubbed by snobby critics, took Cannes by storm and became a Down Under sensation.

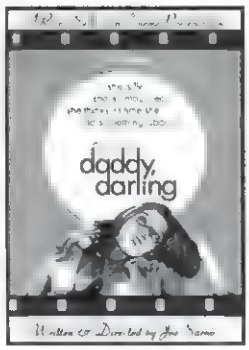


Several exploitation sub-genres from the glory days of the grindhouse have had recent resurgences, but **BLITZKRIEG: ESCAPE FROM STALAG 69 (Wild Eye Releasing)** ups the ante by giving us a new take on one of the sleaziest subjects of all time — the Nazi sexploitation-and-savagery romp, made (in)famous in the '70s with Deuce staples such as the ILSA franchise. But this is no wimpy, watered down studio effort — it's an indie labor of-(twisted)-love by writer-director Keith J. Crocker, so prepare yourself for threadbare production values, muddy sound, atrocious acting and accents, blustery dialogue, over the top melodrama, a smidgen of political commentary, and gratuitous sadism aplenty! This is an insanely ambitious do-it-yourself tribute to sick-assed cinema, with a ridiculous story that tosses every possible cliché into the pot, then gleefully allows it to boil over. It opens in 1955 Argentina, with ex-Nazi slug Helmet Schultz (Charles Esser) on the run and confessing his sins as the Commandant of the notorious Stalag 69. We then return to this World War II P.O.W. camp, where the co-ed(!) Allied prisoners are planning an upcoming revolt, the Krauts spend their copious free time torturing naked female captives, and Schultz conducts unauthorized, immoral medical procedures. Along the way, we also get bloody castrations, a naked gal with a machine gun; a black woman who's stripped, spit on, chained up, and whipped; and a Japanese visitor's lessons on the fine art of tongue ripping. Schultz is also busy abusing one prime captive, a Russian female named Natasha (Tatyana Kot), who's a furious force of nature. Of course, all hell is going to bust loose during the escape-finale, as all of these long-tortured fuckers exact their righteous revenge. No question, this often makes HOGAN'S HEROES look realistic, and clocking in at over two full hours(!), it's downright exhausting. But despite its paltry budget, Crocker probably put more energy and effort into this outrageous project and its surprisingly complex script than any other Nazi-prison-camp film ever made. He definitely knows the territory, treats it with genuine respect and doesn't skimp on the cheap thrills. The packed DVD includes star and director's commentary, interviews, deleted scenes, bloopers, and Crocker's early short DeSADE '88.



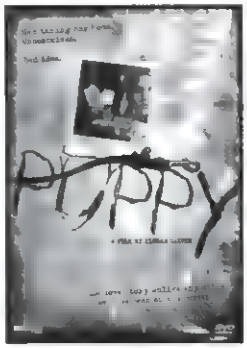
Focusing on the life, career and controversial death of Dutch/California conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader, **HERE IS ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE (Cult Epics)** offers a superb glimpse into a man who was considered an enigma, even to his friends — only to end up lost at sea in 1975 when, at the age of 33, he attempted a West-East crossing of the Atlantic (all alone, in a ridiculously tiny 12 foot sail boat). Far from your usual 'portrait of an artist', director and fellow Dutch émigré Rene Daalder (MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH) places himself at the center of the film, since he shared similar early experiences. Along the way, Daalder ventures to The Netherlands to meet Ader's old neighbors, schoolmates and brother; speaks to his widow, Mary Sue Ader-Andersen, who recalls their first encounter, Vegas wedding and suburban lifestyle, rummages through Mary Sue's over-stuffed home, mixes in old photos and snippets of Ader's films; and attempts to analyze Bas Jan's distinctive art (such as exhibitions that featured concrete blocks dropped onto fragile objects) — culminating in a foolish demise that only Aders (and other equally-pretentious artists) could rationalize as deep. The package includes a 23 minute Q&A with Daalder and Mary Sue at the film's L.A. premiere, plus a separate disc of Bas Jan's film and video work. Several of these dialogue-free shorts consist of gravity-effected Bas Jan falling off his roof, riding a bike into a canal, dropping from a tree — sort of like a minimalist JACKASS — while others consist of a close-up of himself crying, broken light bulbs and flower arranging. Why are they important works of art? I'm still not sure. Though I never bought into Ader's "remarkable" talent (ironically, Rene's occasional glimpses into his own early life are more interesting), it's a compelling and unique profile of a driven, self-destructive young soul.

Despite its risqué subject matter, director Joe Sarno's 1970 Danish coming-of-age melodrama **DADDY, DARLING (Retro-Seduction Cinema/POPcinema)** is not one of his more memorable efforts. In fact, this is remarkably tame stuff. Pretty-but-one-dimensional Helle Louise stars as Katja, a pouty 19 year old blonde who lost her mom at an early age and now has an unhealthy attachment to her distinguished dad (Ole Wisborg). She's also a manipulative tease who likes to feign insomnia in order to sleep in Papa's bed, but he maintains self-control (which will, no question, disappoint sexploitation deviants; at least it leads to a dreamy fantasy sequence of naked, naughty Katja). Jealousy erupts when she learns that Daddy has been secretly schtupping Svea (Gio Petre, THE DOLL), an age-appropriate work colleague, and the exact moment this possessive minx decides to actually seduce her father, he announces that he's marrying Svea — only 90 seconds before he's leaving to get hitched! Ultimately, when she hears Daddy making love to Svea, Katja freaks out and comes up with a 'brilliant' plan to tear them apart, using skills taught to her by a local lesbian artist. The film's tone is somber, the pacing is dull and it's difficult to care about doe eyed Katja, since she's a petulant dimwit who deserves a good paddling from her father (except she'd probably *enjoy* that). At least there's artsy cinematography by Mikael Salomon (who moved onto Hollywood fare like THE ABYSS and BACKDRAFT, and recently directed the ANDROMEDA STRAIN mini-series), although this widescreen print is so scratchy that it looks like some '70s projectionist ran the print over a cheese grater. The disc includes a 16 minute interview with Sarno and producer Kenn Collins.



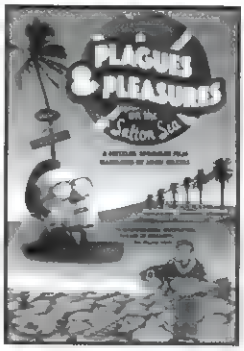
Just imagine if Bob & Doug McKenzie tried to make a gory monster movie. The result would've probably resembled director Andrew Jordan's **THINGS (www.things1989.com)**, a below-low-budget, 1989 Canadian horror indie so unapologetically crude and loopy that it soon developed a small but fervent (and undoubtedly drunk) cult following. Now available on an extra-packed DVD, it's sure to soften the brainpans of unsuspecting 21st century viewers. Co-writer/producer Barry J. Gillis stars as our mulleted hero, Don Drake, who's hanging out at his brother Doug's house, downing brews and watching shitty horror flicks on TV with his best bud Fred (Bruce Roach). Unfortunately, these two dudes have picked the worst possible time to visit, since Doug is a nutcase and his wife is currently giving birth to a Zanti Misfit' style creature with a mouthful of pointy teeth, after being artificially impregnated by a local mad scientist. "Somethin' went wrong," indeed! Searching the house, they find more and more of these 'things' scattered about — sitting on the toilet, down in the basement, biting off fingers — and it ends with a big, bloody critter-massacre chock full of vomit, power drills, chainsaws, and hilariously-clumsy writing. Meanwhile, '80s-porn-starlet Amber Lynn is intercut throughout the film as a big haired TV reporter with rudimentary reading skills. A majority of the film is set inside of this out-of-the-way house, and you get the distinct feeling that the entire cast was making up their inane dialogue as they went along ("I hammered your head in! Are you all right?"). The acting is beyond overwrought (usually found only in amateur projects that only end up screened for family and equally-besotted friends), and Gillis is on some altogether unfathomable, Nicolas-Cage-at-his screwiest plane. The disc includes a chaotic commentary by Gillis, Jordan and additional guests; grainy Canadian-TV news-snippets about the flick; a 50 minute THINGS reunion with Jordan and Gillis on some crappy public-access show; plus rough, behind-the-scenes footage of Amber Lynn's lone scene (which demonstrates just how low-rent this whole wacky enterprise was).

Writer director Kieran Galvin's 2005 feature debut **PUPPY (Dokument Films/MPI)** is a twisted Australian drama involving suicide, captivity, death love, and unchecked mental illness. Kicked out of her sister's apartment for stealing, Liz (Nadia Townsend) is alone, penniless, living out of her car, and preparing to kill herself. But her life is saved at the last moment by passing tow truck driver Aiden (Bernard Curry), who takes this self-destructive young blonde to his remote country home. Is he a good Samaritan? Far from it. Convinced that Liz is actually his long estranged wife Helen, Aiden ties her up, keeps her on a leash and she has no other choice but to play along with his sick delusion (but balks when he tries to screw her). As time passes, a very strange and unconventional relationship develops between the two — Liz with a dog collar locked 'round her neck and unable to escape, and Aiden, who's an increasingly unstable loose cannon. At any moment he's liable to veer off into some strange delusion, such as when Aiden becomes worried that "Helen" has an internal "blockage" that could harm her (imaginary) fetus, so he tries to take a vacuum cleaner to her insides! The basic premise might smack of earlier hostage-fare like MISERY, but this is more quietly unsettling and unpredictable, particularly in the later portions, when the tables are abruptly turned and now empowered Liz makes some equally unhinged demands. Surprisingly romantic at times, Galvin (who scripted 2005's food-fetish creep-fest FEED) maintains a continual unease, while the two leads deserve credit for making these bizarre, potentially unsympathetic characters as intriguing as they are.



Another amazing blast of cinematic nostalgia for Deuce and drive-in addicts arrives in **42nd STREET FOREVER: Volume 3 - EXPLOITATION EXPLOSION (Synapse)**, with 101-minutes worth of trailers representing the best and worst titles from the 1970's and early-'80s. Every sub genre that made the big screen, B-movie experience so damned enjoyable is here: T&A fluff (HOT T-SHIRTS), shitty teen-comedies (GORP), animal-attack yarns (THE PACK), sleazy true tales (SURVIVE), British imports (THE PENTHOUSE), and loads of hackneyed horror. We also get American celebs slumming in overseas action rotgut (Robert Conrad in SUDDEN DEATH; kickboxing champ Joe Lewis' star-studded JAGUAR LIVES!), unsuccessful genre-hybrids (the 1976 Asian spaghetti western THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER), and martial arts fare that ranges from Cannon crapola like ENTER THE NINJA to the Hong Kong chop-socky gem FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH. A few relatively mainstream oddities such as CONVOY and TATTOO are included, plus one legitimately good film (Saul Bass' PHASE IV) even manages to squeeze in amongst this compilation's copious 'the title says it all' outings like CHAIN GANG WOMEN and THE HAPPY HOOKER GOES HOLLYWOOD. Despite its lack of *real* obscurities, the trailers are certainly fast and fun, while the disc's real highlight is the commentary track by FANGORIA's managing editor Michael Gingold, film historian (and SC contributor) Chris Poggiali and A.V. Maniacs editor Edwin Samuelson. When it comes to cinematic schlock, these guys definitely know their shit, while offering up more trivia than one healthy human brain can theoretically retain.

Located 50 miles southeast of Palm Springs, California, the Salton Sea is one of the bleakest-looking niches of America — a sweltering area with polluted water, a garbage-strewn landscape and long-abandoned tourist traps — and 2006's **PLAGUES & PLEASURE ON THE SALTON SEA (www.plaguesandpleasures.com)** is a depressing and altogether fascinating 73-minute portrait of this region and its warped residents. Co-directors Chris Metzler and Jeff Springer travel through the various communities that dot this salty body of water's shoreline, while talking to longtime residents who still call this "ecological disaster" home. Along with memories of the past and pipe dreams of the future, some of the odder folks includes a Hungarian freedom fighter, a leathery nudist and a religious "mountain artist." We also get a local history lesson — from the Salton Sea's man-made, early 1900's creation to its '50s heyday as a fishing hotspot. Alas, instead of becoming the Riviera of America, environmental problems turned it into a combination slum low-rent retirement-community, with businesses closing down, birds dying off from botulism, the lake drying up, and (with the exception of Sonny Bono) constant political footdragging. Steeped in colorful old archival footage, dilapidated trailers, sick pelicans, and narration by the inimitable John Waters, this is a sad and strangely beautiful Travelogue of the Damned. The disc includes a 57-minute "environmental" cut of the film, which eliminates the nuttier residents, plus several shorts: a vintage, 13-minute Salton Sea real estate promo, extolling this vacation paradise, a featurette on soundtrack musicians Friends of Dean Martinez; a profile of local artist Leonard's Salvation Mountain; and Scott Calonico's wonderfully freaky, 10-minute LSD A GO GO, about C.I.A. drug experimentation and possible murder.

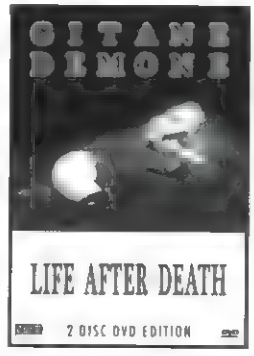


When first released to theatres in 1971, **SIMON, KING OF THE WITCHES (Dark Sky)** was promoted as your typical fright fare, but this heady blend of sex, the supernatural and offbeat humor is closer in spirit to the groovy counter culture flicks of the late-'60s. Think of it as "*The Rise and Fall of a Do-It Yourself Warlock*." Andrew Prine stars as Simon, a part time white magician and full-time vagrant who suddenly gets an opportunity to shake a few bucks out of the local hipster scene, and jumps in headfirst — holding court, selling trinkets, doing Tarot readings, and putting the moves on lovely Brenda Scott (who earlier co-starred with Prine on TV's THE ROAD WEST, and was one of his three wives). Simon shuts up all of his skeptics after he "death curses" a guy who ripped him off and, soon afterward, a floating protoplasmic blob drops a stone pot on his head. Soon Simon is buying into his own hype, amassing local stoners as followers, conducting rituals in ornate silk robes, busting into a local Wicca meeting (led by Warhol-starlet Ultra Violet, and populated by several pissed-off, rather-unappealing naked witches), plus preparing for a "cosmic event" that involves murder, city-wide chaos and Simon's voyage into a mirror dimension (Hey, kids! It's Cheesy Psychedelic Lightshow Time!). The messy script also includes a subplot involving 'dope pushing', the city D.A. and the Police Commissioner. Despite all of its outlandish dialogue (writer Robert Phippeny was a self-confessed warlock, nuff said), Prine keeps us charmed with Simon's crazy-windbag enthusiasm, while cinematographer David L. Butler (who later became an aerial camera operator for flicks like APOCALYPSE NOW and TERMINATOR 2) contributes some trippy visuals. The DVD includes recent interviews with Prine and director Bruce Kessler (ANGELS FROM HELL).

At first glance, writer-director producer David Walker's 2005 indie feature **DAMAGED GOODS (www.damagedgoodsthefilm.com)** seems like the antithesis of his outrageous short film BLACK SANTA'S REVENGE. It's a comedy about relationships and the eternal battle of the sexes, and lacks any big guns, bullet-riddled bodies or badass heroes. But don't let that turn you off. Instead, the story focuses on two lonely, single thirtysomethings, Kevin (Greg James) and Michelle (Lara Kobrin), who have each had their share of doomed relationships, lying partners and one-night stands. They're both screwed up over recent break ups and each has a pair of ever present companions and confidants — an angel and a devil who badger them with love life advice. Kevin is a bit of an obnoxious jackass, Michelle is a clueless pushover, and once they finally meet at a party, it's the beginning of uneasy small talk, severe missteps plus a couple unexpected touchstones that could pull them together. Or maybe not... Walker capably stretches his $4,000 budget (with half of that spent on food) and the film has a distinctive look, since it's been run through something resembling an Adobe Posterize effect, which gives this live-action story a uniquely cartoonish veneer. Most importantly, his script resides in a Romantic Bullshit Free Zone that strips away the happy, sappy clichés of most movie love stories. These are just two sad, desperate people dealing with the slim possibility of true love, while struggling with their conflicting desires. It's a good piece of work but, despite its many humorous moments, not a particularly upbeat tale. The disc includes a commentary by Walker, James and Todd Robinson; a making-of featurette; a "non-toon" (unprocessed) version of the film; plus hilarious rough-takes of a scene featuring Troma grandpoobah Lloyd Kaufman as a drunk partygoer.

The latest impressively demented feature from director Richard Griffin (CREATURE FROM HILLBILLY LAGOON) is 2007's **SPLATTER DISCO (Shock-O-Rama Cinema/POPcinema)**, a low budget, musical comedy-fetish-romance oddity that's crude, silly, energetic, violent, and armed with a heartfelt progressive social agenda. Trent Haaga (SUBURBAN NIGHTMARE) stars as Kent Chubb, the manager of a unique nightclub called "Den O' Iniquity," which caters to lovable local deviants and has his town's "Moral Majority fruitcake" leaders in a tizzy — particularly puritanical councilwoman Alma (Lynn Lowry). She plans to run Chubb and his clientele out of town, even if it means breaking the law to do so. Speaking of law breakers, a killer is also on the loose, slaughtering people connected to this kinky locale. But amidst the venom and violence, there's also unrequited love, since endearingly geeky Echo (Jason McCormick) has a major crush on a "Furry Fridays" cutie named Danni (Sarah Nicklin). Alas, she has a jealous, asshole boyfriend. Oh, and let's not forget the film's musical moments, such as when the cast erupts in a 'furry' version of Cole Porter's "Let's Do It," or an LSD-fueled courtroom-freakout number. THEY CAME FROM WITHIN's Lowry — 60-years old but still feisty as hell — makes a superb power-hungry bitch, while DAWN OF THE DEAD's Ken Foree co-stars as Kent's adopted dad Shank Chubb, who urges his son to fight back against these Puritan asswipes (and later hits the dance floor in a snazzy white tux!). SPLATTER DISCO succeeds beyond all expectations thanks to winning performances from the entire cast, as well as an unexpectedly sweet script by Griffin and Ted Marr, which mixes the unbridled craziness of a top-level Troma production with a rousing, Capra-esque 'Little Guy Vs. The System' struggle. DVD extras include a commentary by Griffin and Lowry, plus a 37 minute making of featurette.

In the '80s, Gitane Demone was best known as a member of the grating Gothrock band Christian Death, and her later solo career had a broader range (though an even more limited appeal), as evidenced by the 2-disc **LIFE AFTER DEATH (Cult Epics)**. Containing 3 1/4 hours of rare material — a mix of performance footage and a few interview snippets — its opening segment, a 13 minute 1991 program for Dutch TV, gives newcomers (like myself) a quick intro to her life, music and passions. With the exception of a '91 video for "A Heavenly Melancholy" (directed by Nico B) and a clip from the '95 doc FETISH GENERATION (with Demone discussing "alternative sex") the majority of it consists of live gigs filmed throughout Europe, from 1989 to 1998. Her voice is often raspy and off-key, sometimes surprisingly melodic, as she attempts smoky-nightclub classics ("Gloomy Sunday", "I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues", "Love For Sale") with extremely mixed results. There's also a lengthy London set of Demone and the late Rozz Williams performing as Christian Death in 1996, plus 7-songs from their "Dream Home Heartache" cabaret-collaboration. Looking like a weather-beaten Madonna, we also witness the shifts in her fashion sense — from a '40s-era ballgown to PVC dominatrix garb (two years after Ms. Ciccone made it trendy with her 'Girlie Show' tour, so originality wasn't Gitane's strong suit). Including a bonus-CD of unreleased cover tunes, any hard-core Demone fan will undoubtedly lap this up, but it's a grueling overdose for *anyone* else.

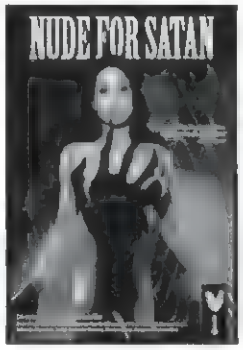


Jack Arnold directed some classic 1950's films — including THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN and THE MOUSE THAT ROARED — but two decades later his career had nose-dived to the level of the lightweight 1974 sex-comedy **GAMES GIRLS PLAY (Dark Sky)**. Christina Hart stars as Bunny O'Hara, a ditzy young nymph who relocates to London when her ambassador daddy is transferred for the good of the nation (since this 17-year-old sexpot has been screwing her way through the top military brass). Forced to attend a strict, British, all-girl school, rebellious Bunny is soon breaking the rules with the help of her continually undraped room mates (Jane Anthony, Drina Pavlovic, Jill Damas): skinny-dipping in the pool, turning a basketball game against a boys' school into a grope-fest, and eventually competing to see who is best at scoring with a "mature man," with each girl targeting an important political figure. One gal crawls into the limo of a Russian Polit Bureau bigwig, another plays nude ping pong with Red China's champ, yet another goes after a Kissinger esque U.S. playboy, while Bunny tries to get to the Prince of England by shagging a Windsor Castle guard — as school shutterbug Ducky captures their successes on film. But will their sex games lead to a global scandal when the scheming Chinese get their mitts on Ducky's camera? Also known as THE BUNNY CAPER, this lewd lark is competently lensed (thanks to cinematographer Alan Hume, who later shot a trio of Roger Moore 007 flicks) and Arnold finds any excuse to have the girls strip. But while the ladies are certainly hot and Hart is quite charming (even when fully clothed), the script is particularly trite and toothless. Look for U.F.O.'s Ed Bishop as a D.C. politician. The disc includes a recent nine-minute interview with Hart.

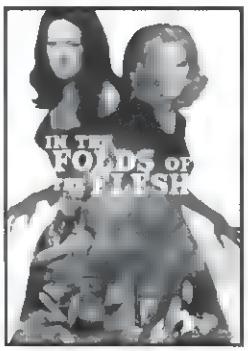
In the crude, assuredly non-P.C. new horror-comedy **RETARDEAD (www.4321films.com)**, the writer-director team of Dan West and Rick Popko have created a sorta sequel to their 2003 feature MONSTURD (reviewed in SC#22). And as if stopping a "shit monster" weren't bad enough, the poor residents of Butte County are now under attack by the undead! Nutcase Dr. Stern (Dan Burr) is back on the loose and hiding out at a Special Ed school for adults, with plans to use these slow-witted students as guinea pigs for his latest 'Algernon Nine' experiments. Although his brain-injections create an initial IQ-surge in test subjects, there's one pesky drawback — they all soon turn into blue-skinned, cannibalistic zombies. Meanwhile, local Sheriff Duncan (Paul Weiner) is on the job, accompanied by two bumbling deputies (played by West and Popko, who manage to make Barney Fife look hard-boiled), even as brilliant FBI agent Susan Hannigan (Beth West) returns to Butte County to track down psycho-Stern (who's actually rather stupid for an 'evil genius'). The film really picks up once these developmentally-challenged undead go on the prowl and the Feds quarantine the town — amidst pulled-out entrails, chewed-on babies, ripped-off heads, comic-relief vomit, hundreds of others infected, and the usual flesh-eating shenanigans. It's all very silly and extremely gooey, and we even get a bevy of seductive, man-hungry zombie sluts, played by The Living Dead Girlz dance troupe. Also, look for Jello Biafra as the town's Mayor. The feature is preceded by trailers for some insanely no-budget horror-efforts, and the disc includes 20 minutes of deleted scenes and outtakes, plus make up FX footage.

The ambiguously-entitled **INCARNATION (Cinema Abattoir; www.cinema-abattoir.com)** is an intriguing new 80 minute compilation of international short films which seem to have little in common, except for their experimental approach. What do they all mean? Damned if I know! In addition, each DVD case comes wrapped in butcher paper and twine. It starts out strong, with the 1967 Belgian mindfuck LES SOUFFRANCES D'UN OEUF MEURITI [Sufferings of a Ravaged Egg] from director Roland Letham (THE BLOODTHIRSTY FAIRY), which consists of a few of surreal vignettes — a man erotically sucks on a starfish's arm, a naked woman lies in a field with a crotch full of maggots and a crucifix, a man cries tears of blood onto a sunnyside-up egg, etc. Colorful, strange and more than a bit baffling (since its narration is unsubtitled), it still holds up after over 40 years. Alas, the rest of the collection are all 21st century concoctions. Helen Cattet and Bruno Forzani's CATHARSIS (2000) is a mercifully-brief vision of messy murder; identity and gender is blandly explored in THE PANDROGENY MANIFESTO (2005) starring Throbbing Gristle's creepy Genesis P. Orridge and the late Lady Jaye; and several of 'em resemble abstract film school assignments, like Karl Lemieux's WESTERN SUNBURN (2007), which has clips from some B-movie western freezing, bubbling and melting in the projector. Others are more intriguing, such as Micki Pellerano's mindblowing meditation on the Number 10, PANTELLA (2007), while Usama Alshaibi's CONVULSION (2004) offers up a gauze bandaged woman (the filmmaker's wife, Kristie Alshaibi), as her crotch bleeds, a shit-like substance pours from her mouth, her body spasms, and her anus spews. It's not pretty, but it *is* powerfully unsettling. But my favorite in the bunch is Reynold Reynolds and Patrick Jolley's visually-stunning BURN (2002), in which a couple casually sits in their apartment as it goes up in flames, a neighbor is up to no good, and all of it's awash in searing, slo-mo imagery. This is a severely mixed bag, with several of the shorts nearly overdosing on their own pretentions, but there's more than enough cinematic talent and shock value to balance it out.

A sultry brunette chick runs through the dark, misty woods with her diaphanous nightgown wide-open and nothing left to the imagination. Now *that's* a way to kick off a movie! Welcome to **NUDE FOR SATAN (Redemption USA/Salvation)**, a hilariously surreal 1973 Italian sex-'n' horror romp from director Luigi Batzella (a.k.a. Paolo Solvay) that doesn't make one lick of logical sense, but compensates for that with non-stop gothic goofiness. While driving through the countryside, Dr. Benson (Stelio Candelli) witnesses an auto accident and aids an injured hottie named Susan (Rita Calderoni). Seeking help at a nearby castle, our Doc enters the spooky place and discovers weird shenanigans behind every door. Stranger still, a doppelganger for Susan, dressed in period garb, promptly seduces him. Meanwhile, Susan roams the building on her own and runs into its eerie, from-another-time residents, including a deranged double for the Doc. Throughout it all, the mansion's Master leers and utters cryptic warnings. It almost feels as if the filmmakers were scribbling together the next day's script during drunken dinner breaks. People suddenly vanish, daytime abruptly changes to night, and when Susan falls asleep, she's immersed in a lesbian-fantasy-turned-murder nightmare. Later, she stumbles across a bound woman who's whipped and stabbed during a Satanic ceremony. Oh, and let's not forget about Susan's encounter with a painfully-cut-rate giant spider. Are they all insane? Dead? Or simply trapped in a devilish delirium? Whatever it is, it's capped off with a big nude demonic ritual that resembles 'Twyla Tharp Meets Anton LaVey.' Calderoni is certainly lovely, and isn't adverse to having her breasts hanging out for much of this nonsense — in the pursuit of chaotic, fast paced, incomprehensible Pastaland craziness. The feature is in Italian with subtitles, but also has an English dialogue track.

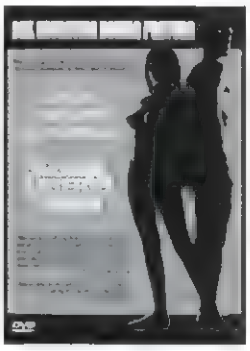


Director Sergio Bergonzelli's 1970 Italian-Spanish psychodrama **IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH (Severin)** has everything you could possibly want in overwrought family dysfunction. It wallows in corpses, sex games, incest, dementia by the bucketful and even boasts a few groovy, psychedelic moments. There's some fishy business occuring in a palatial villa occupied by two sultry adult sisters — brunette Lucille (Eleonora Rossi Drago) and blonde Falesse (Anna Maria Pierangeli, only a year before her death from a drug overdose) — plus Lucille's artist son Colin. When a dog starts digging up human remains from their yard, let's strangle it! When Cousin Michel pays a visit, why not stab him, amidst trippy flashbacks? And it isn't everyone who keeps caged vultures as pets! Meanwhile, Falesse is the sexpot of the bunch, luring one man after another into bed, only to succumb to old traumas and murderous bad habits (with any dead bodies disposed of in the basement's handy acid-bath). The tables are momentarily turned when a fat, greasy, escaped convict blackmails the sisters with info about their pop's murder, but it's a last-minute surprise visitor who finally shatters their insulated world with his long repressed, deliriously convoluted secrets. This is EuroTrash at its most preposterously garish, with vibrant colors, outlandishly-hip threads, out-of-sight plot digressions (such as a visit to a high-kitsch asylum), and flashback upon flashback, until it reaches absurd



levels. Everyone here is also batshit crazy and the cruelty doesn't stop, even when simple logic does. Bergonzelli even includes flashbacks to Lucille's Nazi prison camp experiences — simply to set up an jaw-dropping bathtub-murder, utilizing a cuckoo clock and cyanide! Sure, there isn't one socially redeeming aspect to this flick, but it's gruesome, stylish and steeped in delightfully over-the-top delirium. What more could anyone ask for?

If you're too young to remember when 'educational' sex-documentaries littered 42nd Street grindhouses, here's a double dose of these prurient productions, both directed by M.C. Von Hellen (a.k.a. John Lamb, who also gave us the wild MONDO KEYHOLE) — **SEXUAL FREEDOM IN DENMARK** and **SEXUAL LIBERTY NOW! (After Hours Cinema/POPcinema)**. Released in 1970, SEXUAL FREEDOM begins its 75-minute exploration of the "divine gift" of human sexuality in Copenhagen, since its residents have "outgrown the taboos" of more prudish countries. We visit a hippie nightclub straight out of PSYCH OUT; check out a porno store with a shopgirl in a see thru nightie; witness busty examples of how nudism has spread throughout Europe, and watch an 'art film' being shot with five nude women rolling on a bed. There's plenty of bare flesh on hand, along with the occasional Sex Ed info (sexual disease facts, egg and sperm diagrams, graphic birth footage, plus a hardcore sequence that demonstrates how penises and vaginas fit together. Meanwhile, our balding, goateed, always-dead-serious narrator goes about his difficult job of interviewing (often naked) women about sex. Laughably blunt, it tries to convince the viewer that any form of censorship or sexual repression is unwarranted, destructive and totally square, man .. 1971's SEXUAL LIBERTY NOW! is the more relevant of this pro-sex pair, since it kicks off with an important slice of US history — footage of the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which, three years after its 1968 creation, recommended *legalizing* pornography. One of the only dissenting members was Charles Keating (best known for his Keating Five Savings & Loan scandal, involving John McCain), with this repressed shithead bellowing about how the US is becoming a "pagan, animalistic and base society." The rest of this 64-minute film strives to prove that porn isn't simply harmless — it's beneficial! College age men and women view sex films and *don't* turn into slobbering degenerates; a hip, non-judgmental Reverend offers sexual counseling, plus we get case study recreations of how sexual liberation leads to marital bliss (accompanied by gratuitous, on-screen coitus, of course). Alas, it gets bogged down with silent era erotica, a lewd Snow White cartoon and droning narration. Despite their hit-and-miss approaches, both films are groovy, silly Time Capsules from the sexual revolution.



Loosely based on the Marquis de Sade's novel, director Chris Boger's 1976 production of **JUSTINE (Redemption USA/Salvation)** is probably a bit too slow and somber for everyday sexploitation fans, but succeeds as a stylish voyage into 18th century debauchery. Following the suicide of their father, two penniless teen sisters are unable to pay for their convent schooling. While Justine (Koo Stark, who became a British tabloid target when she shacked up with Prince Andrew in '82) is devout and chaste, Juliette (Lydia Lisle) is a free spirit drawn to passion and depravity, and when they piss off the corrupt, sinful Mother Superior (who tries to assault virginal Justine), these siblings are kicked to the curb. While Juliette is taken under the wing of a high-class French Madame and instructed in the "erotic arts," naive nincompoop Justine refuses and skedaddles — but she's painfully innocent about the ugly, real world. First, Justine seeks a place to crash from an elderly Pastor, only to get jumped by the drunk old geezer; then she links up with a band of scoundrels and graverobbers. Meanwhile, Martin Potter co-stars as Lord Carlisle, who hopes to rescue Juliette from whoredom, but ends up being the biggest dick of all. So what have we learned here? Sin is rewarded, piety is destroyed, and it all ends in a particularly brutal fashion. Yes, it's a happy, happy world. Throughout it all, Justine is cute but grating — always lounging around seductively, but fighting off any man who takes the bait, while spouting judgmental religious hooey. It doesn't help that waifish Stark is strictly one-note in the acting department. The production doesn't look cheap though, thanks to breathtaking cinematography by Roger Deakins, in his first non-documentary effort before moving to the US and earning seven Oscar noms for gigs like THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION and FARGO. DVD extras include interviews with Boger and screenwriter Ian Cullen.

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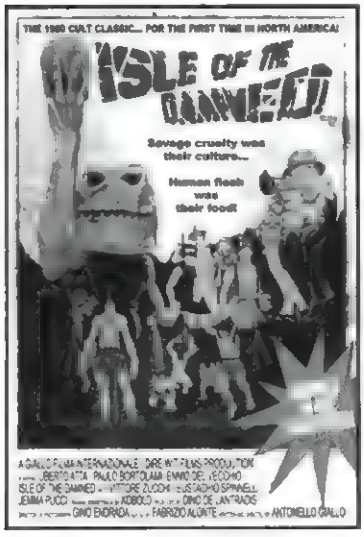
UNDER GROUND ODDITIES

ISLE OF THE DAMNED (2008) [www.direwitfilms.com]. Posing as a long-lost 1980 feature by infamous EuroAuteur Antonello Giallo, this energetic send-up of old school Italian jungle-exploitation is incredibly silly, insanely violent and loads of fun. Director Mark Colegrove and writer Mark Leake have crafted a low-rent love letter to a bygone era of carnage-crammed cinema, complete with intentionally-lousy English dubbing, poorly matched animal stock-footage, emulsion scratches galore, and a surplus of '70s-porn mustaches. Our hero, Jack Steele (Larry Gamlet), is part of a seafaring expedition into the Devil's Archipelago, in search of Marco Polo's lost treasure, but the moment the crew sets foot on Cannibal Island, they encounter animal-skin-wearing, stringy-haired brutes in the midst of preparing dinner — with lost tourists as the main course. Jack heroically saves a young woman, but not before her parents are graphically disemboweled. In addition to these Yama Yama tribesfolk, there's a full roster of supporting oddballs, including a rich anthropologist with a dark secret; his mute, ex-Yakuza manservant, Jack's adopted son Billy (an adult, playing adolescent); plus the obligatory fat, greedy, degenerate expedition leader. No genre-cliché is avoided during its 85 fast-paced minutes — we get flesh-eating piranhas, native rituals, booby traps, traumatic flashbacks, insipid romance, father son conflict and bonding, as well as 'deep' questions (who's the *real* savage? The primitive Yama-Yamas or Modern Man? Wow, that's a mindblower!) Amidst all of this hammy acting and unsubtle humor, it's also really fuckin' bloody at times and these guys put some serious effort into the hilariously extreme gore effects. Kudos to everyone involved.

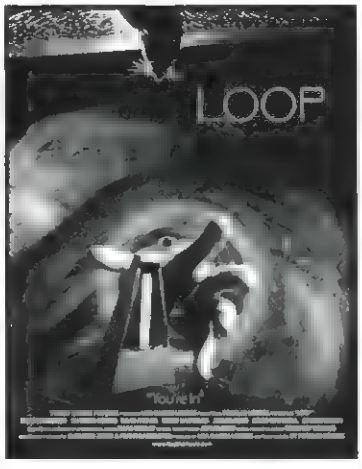


THE VAMPIRE'S TOMB (2006) [www.youtube.com/terminalpictures]. Way back in SC#18, I reviewed Andrew Perkowski's b&w, retro-juvenile-delinquent ditty ED WOOD'S DEVILS GIRLS, which featured a gang of hopped up, sociopathic chicks on the prowl. It was crude, crazy and fueled by a contagious DIY energy, and this long-awaited follow-up continues in that grand tradition. Based on an unmade Ed Wood, Jr. screenplay that was to star Bela Lugosi, it's a spoooooky, 66 minute tale of revenge beyond the grave. As a wealthy family schemes and bickers over their share of the estate, a glassy eyed woman in a white gown staggers about the area, menacing 'easily-hysterical individuals' (you know... *women*). Could it be the undead ghost of Aunt Lucille, looking for revenge? Along the way, we get sinister motives, assorted murders, an amusing Tor Johnson wannabe, a cut-rate seance, and everyone in this outlandishly dysfunctional family out for themselves. Meanwhile, a mysterious figure in a black coat and scarf-covered face, Dr. Acula, pops up to blame it all on vampirism! Sure, the basic storyline is generic C movie fare, but it's the production's over-ripe attitude and campy moments that breathe life into this hokum. Full of mismatched 8mm and 16mm footage, over-the-top acting, bizarre segues, visible boom mikes, pencil-thin mustaches, laughable last-minute plot twists, and no shortage of Wood's legendary, deep purple prose (as well as a few loving nods to his original films), the end result is a winningly loopy patchwork concoction.

HIS LAST REQUEST (2005) [www.hislastrequest.com]. Writer-director Simon Birrell's dreamlike Spanish psychodrama gets points for its distinctive style — it's silent, shot in black-and-white, set entirely within one large apartment, and packs its 27-minutes with mood and menace.. As his death nears, an elderly man referred to only as Father (Jess Franco-alumnus Jack Taylor) puts his estate in order, following a lifetime of alcohol, ex-wives and indulgence. He wants his loving Daughter (Carmen Vadillo) to inherit everything, but all of that planning goes straight to hell after they hire a sexy live-in Nurse (Iris Diaz). At first glance, Father begins drooling over this flirtatious young temptress, and he's soon playing peeping tom, thanks to a secret closed-circuit camera in the Nurse's bedroom. Once our doddering deviant is sufficiently worked up, he offers her a wad of cash to model some erotic attire from a past conquest — but she doesn't easily fall for his games. Instead, our Nurse methodically asserts control over the small household, with some steamy lesbian lovemaking tossed into the mix when she seduces initially-hesitant Daughter. It's pretty clear that the ol' dude should've spent less time ogling his new employee's breasts, instead of thoroughly checking out her references. Alas, I figured out the 'surprise' twist far too easily. Though nothing terribly memorable, THE LAST REQUEST is a simple, tightly-wound tale of sexual manipulation and a strong showcase for Birrell's technical finesse.

THE GHOULIGANS! SUPER SHOW (2008) [www.theghouligans.com]. Growing up in the '70s, I devoured every issue of *Famous Monsters*, even as I was regularly assaulted by insipid prime-time TV-variety shows hosted by the likes of Donny & Marie or Tony Orlando & Dawn. No surprise, a melding of these two pop-culture mainstays sounded like good fun, complete with a roster of 4th-rate monsters that includes bloodsucking host Count Farnham (Justin Hertz), the blue undead ghoul Void, leather-jacketed werewolf Wolfgang, bolt-necked lab-creation Boris, and assorted gruesome guest stars (robots, a fishman, witches, go-go dancing girls, et cetera). Created by Michael Koscik (the show's writer, who's also Boris) and Sean King (who directs and plays Void), the 41-minute program mixes slapstick sketches, threadbare production values, an intrusive laughtrack, plus GROOVY GOOLIES level juvenile humor that's best appreciated by third-graders or too-stoned-to-move adults. Vignettes include Farnham bickering with a trio of demanding brides, only to have his coffin fall on him; Void crawling out of his grave, only to be ridiculed by passing humans; a talk show with a Lucha Libre masked wrestler and Farnham embarrassed by his low-rent commercial gigs; the whole gang gleefully Twistin' on the beach; a "Spooky Surf Off" between cool Wolfy and the fish-out-water Gillman, Boris making Skull Soup on his "Blood and Guts Gore-Met Cooking" show; a row of plastic human skulls cracking corny jokes, and much more. Although never as clever, stylish or downright rockin' as its retro-cousin, the ultra-cool GHOUL-A-GO GO, The Ghouligans delivers a colorful, enthusiastic blast of monsterific nostalgia.

LOOP (2007) [www.loopthemovie.com]. The sophomore feature from writer-director Pericles Lewnes is a gloriously tripped-out exploration of 21st century paranoia, helplessness and manipulation. A radical departure from his first film, the gooey 1987 Troma pickup REDNECK ZOMBIES, this was obviously a very personal project for him, since the script seems to be channeling all of Lewnes' own anger and confusion about the present state of the world. Joe List (Lewnes) is a middle-aged guy who finds himself trapped in a surreal situation. He's suddenly unsure of his surroundings, his wife, even his own identity. Plus who are these strange people that keep popping up in his home? Are they fragments of himself? Or is Joe simply delusional because he's been off his meds? And when he finally ventures outside of his house, it only leads to more questions, even stranger encounters (including alternate versions of himself) and a hallucinatory overdose. In the final act, the script's more political agenda is unveiled, with List (as well as the entire world) trapped between the extreme Left and Right in a loop of craziness and obsession. Sounds more than a little bit confusing? It is! And I didn't even get to the rats, Yukio Mishima, pretentious performance art, 9/11, "Pax Americana", et cetera. Difficult, indulgent and consistently thought provoking, the 85 minute film often leaves the viewer as frustrated and untethered as its protagonist, and although I tended to phase out during some of its longer discussions, it's difficult not to respect this type of ambitious home brewed endeavor.

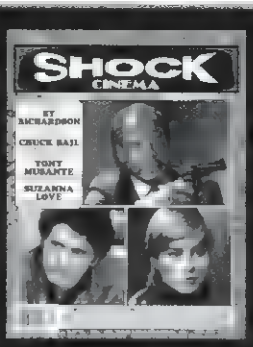


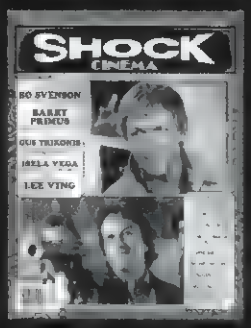
MINDFLESH (2008) [www.mind-flesh.com]. Mixing technical finesse with artistic ballsiness, this 73-minute, U.K.-lensed feature by writer-director Robert Pratten (LONDON VOODOO), hooks the viewer in the opening minutes and keeps us off-kilter throughout. Chris Jackson (Peter Bramhill) becomes obsessed after several sightings of a ghostly woman. Even more

troublesome, his hideous nightmares seem to be spilling over into reality — manifesting themselves into sores and protrusions across his belly, which appear and vanish at random. Oh yeah, plus a naked, blood-soaked, mys tery woman (Carole Derrien) turns up in Chris' flat, who he's soon bathing, clothing and attempting to seduce (which is definitely *not* a good idea) Before long, she's become a topless fixture in Chris' pad, luring him into kinky sexual situations and exposing deep traumas But as he's sucked deeper into this self-destructive pit, multiple planes of reality emerge and people close to him are eventually affected. Based on Peter Scheinman's novel "White Light", this'll probably frustrate anyone looking for simple, straightforward eroticism and horror, but I considered it a welcome throw-back to '80s-mindfuck cinema (e.g early Cronenberg, Ken Russell's ALTERED STATES), which wasn't afraid to confront and confound its viewers This is seriously weird shit, folks, but Pratten pulls it off with skill and intelligence, as well as dizzying visuals that fly off the deep end in the final minutes At the center of it all, Bramhill is appropriately intense and damaged as his character battles with inner and outer demons. MINDFLESH is gorgeously crafted, laced with disorienting visuals and elegantly deranged.

SHOCK CINEMA BACK ISSUES

SC 35. $5. Interviews with **Sy Richardson, Suzanna Love, Tony Musante, Chuck Bail** Reviews: *Trackdown, The Beasts Are On the Streets, Xango From Baker Street, The Soul of Nigger Charley, The Last Run, The Book of Stone, Hoodwink, Blue Blood, Stork, The Bushwhacker*, etc.





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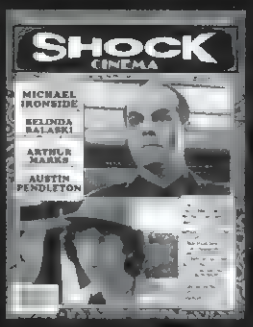

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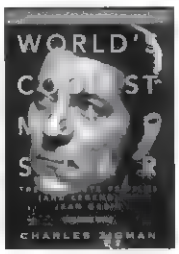
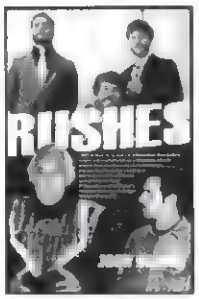
WORLD'S COOLEST MOVIE STAR: The Complete 95 Films (and Legend) of Jean Gabin by Charles Zigman **(Allenwood Press; www.allenwoodpress.com; $39.95 per volume).** Intense, charismatic, tough guy extraordinaire Jean Gabin is one of France's greatest stars and an icon around the globe, but most of his screen work has been criminally-ignored in the US Charles Zigman hopes to change that fact with this incredible two-volume hardcover set, which spans over 1000 pages and pays tribute to a half-century career spanning 95 movies! Tracking down nearly all of these films, he devotes a chapter to each, complete with detailed synopses and critiques — from Gabin's early roles, through stardom with Jean Renoir's LE GRANDE ILLUSION and Julian Duvivier's PEPE LE MOKO, to working with directors such as Marcel Carne, Rene Clement and Max Ophuls, while bouncing between comedies, noirs, period pieces, and melodramas Throughout it all, Zigman doesn't hide his love for many of these films — or for Gabin's multifaceted talents – while bringing attention to dozens of fascinating titles (LA QUAI DES BRUMES, ARCHIMEDE THE BUM, LE CHAT, UN SINGE EN HIVER, etc). More than just a labor of love, this is also a truly invaluable resource any cinematic historian.



RUSHES by Josh Becker **(Pointblank; www.pointblankpress.com; $18.95).** A lot of memoirs have been written by high profile filmmakers, but frankly, it's the guys who've really had to struggle in the industry who have the best stories to tell That's particularly true of this collection of essays by Josh Becker, who's spent the last 20+ years working on low-budget features, cult TV shows and unfulfilled projects – and is also longtime buddies with Sam Raimi and Bruce Campbell. Beginning with teenage home movies shown to schoolmates and his move to Los Angeles in the late '70s, the book's centerpiece is Becker's unedited "EVIL DEAD Journal" — chronicling the day-to-day tedium, chaos and challenging conditions ("My psyche is damaged. My health is damaged, and for what? $50.00 a week?"). In addition to info about directing LUNATICS, A LOVE STORY, THOU SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT and ALIEN APOCALYPSE, and other topics includes Becker's days working as a P.A., the complexities of his 'one-continuous-shot' heist-flick RUNNING TIME, working with Anthony Quinn, his script for the '40s biker-movie CYCLES; and pushing Lucy Lawless as the star of XENA (as well as adding the show's gay-subtext) Thoroughly entertaining, Becker earns my respect for putting everything on the line for his art (e.g. facing bankruptcy by funding the still-undistributed IF I HAD A HAMMER with his own credit cards) and never holding back on his honest opinions (regarding his recent Sci-Fi Channel premiere HARPIES: "Seeing the finished film actually made me sick to my stomach.").



TABOO BREAKERS by Calum Waddell **(Telos Publishing; telos.co.uk; $25.95)** Profiling 18 controversial films that changed the industry, author (and SC-contributor) Calum Waddell's selection is certainly diverse – a few are indie masterpieces, several are cult favorites, but many of them aren't even *good* movies! Each receives its own chapter, with Waddell detailing the film's history, offering his personal opinions and including comments from those involved in each production. Sure, several of the titles have been covered ad infinitum in the past (THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE, THE EVIL DEAD) and, frankly, I couldn't care less about drivel like HOSTEL, but seasoned film buffs will embrace its more obscure entries and their creators: Martin Rosen's THE PLAGUE DOGS, Matt Cimber's THE CANDY TANGERINE MAN, Ulli Lommel's TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES, Jack Hill's COFFY, et cetera. What makes the book really click is Calum's cool array of interviews — we get Marilyn Chambers on the porn-hit BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR; the no bullshit Ralph Bakshi discusses his directorial debut, FRITZ THE CAT; H.G. Lewis, David Friedman and Connie Mason recall BLOOD FEAST; plus many more The films might be a mixed bag, but Waddell dives into each of them with insight and enthusiasm, exploring how each one helped to transform their genre

BEHIND THE PINK CURTAIN: The Complete History of Japanese Sex Cinema by Jasper Sharp **(FAB Press; www.fabpress.com; $34.95).** Sex, violence, politics, controversy, and art — those are just some of the ingredients that went into Japan's infamous Pink Films (*pinku eiga*) The photos that fill this gorgeous, 416 page softcover are often lurid, but author Jasper Sharp delivers an intelligent, in-depth analysis of a genre that's rarely covered by English-language publications — profiling some of the most important Pink films and the directors who revolutionized this twisted genre, including Koji Wakamatsu, Masao Adachi, Kazuhiro Sano, Hisayasu Sato, Takahisa Zeze, and so many more. Tackling everything from censorship in early Japanese films, to Nikkatsu's Roman Porno line, to present-day fare like Mitsuru Meike's THE GLAMOROUS LIFE OF SACHIKO HANAI, this is a dense, exhaustively-researched read Although Sharp's avalanche of information might overwhelm genre-novices, it's an essential acquisition for any Japanese cinema connoisseur.

MAGS, ZINES and SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

ASIAN CULT CINEMA #59 and #60 (P.O. Box 15249, Ft. Pierce, FL 34979; $30 for 6 issues). The newest two editions of this indispensable Asian film digest are laced with informative interviews and articles on cutting edge fare like *Sick Nurses* and Miike's *Sukiyaki Western Django* #59's Q&A's include filmmakers Sion Sono (*Suicide Circle*) and Lee Chang Dong (*Oasis*), while #60 features a talk with director Bong Jun-Ho (*The Host*). **[www.asiancultcinema.com]**

LIQUID CHEESE #28 (8123 West Margaret Lane, Franklin, WI 53132; $3 per issue, payable to Dave Kosanke). The latest dollop of this fun 20-page zine overflows with "movies and music to mangle your mind" — including Indianapolis' HorrorHound Weekend, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*'s locations, plus reviews of dvds, books and big-screen fare (such the gloriously carnage-stuffed *Rambo*). **[hometown.aol.com/dkosanke/myhomepage/index.html]**

LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS #20 and #21 (Richard Klemensen, 3213 48th Place, Des Moines, IA 50310; $7.95). Holy moly! It's a double dose of this incredible, 100-page "journal of classic British horror films"! #20 is a special issue devoted to Philip Nutman's astounding, in-depth history of Amicus Productions, while #21 contains informative articles on the making of *The Curse of Frankenstein*, including interviews with Peter Cushing and director Terence Fisher. Both are must-haves for any fan of old school horror! **[www.littleshoppeofhorrors.com]**

LUNCHMEAT #1 (710 Glendalough Road, Erdenheim, PA 19038; $5 apiece, or $15 for a 4-issue sub). At a time when most print zines are closing up shop, it's great to see a new publication on the scene. This 24 page tribute to VHS horror 'n' schlock from editors Josh Schafer and Ted Gilbert reviews several obscure B-flicks that used to litter mom 'n' pop video stores (such as *Lunchmeat*, *Spasms* and *Mausoleum*), and includes an article on monster toys from the past.

SCREEM #17 (41 Mayer Street, Wilkes Barre, PA 18702; $8.00). The latest edition of Darryl Mayeski's long-running mag tackles the best in horror 'n' exploitation cinema, with a tribute to *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (including a Q&A with Ricou Browning), as well as savvy articles on Mexican fantasy flicks, *Forbidden Zone*, Brother Theodore, Ted V Mikels — plus dozens of DVD reviews. **[www.screemag.com]**

SNACKBAR CONFIDENTIAL (Lance Laurie, P.O. Box 1359, Huntington, NY 11743; $3). This 24-page Xerox digest is a nostalgic blast of newspaper clippings from the '60s and '70s, and their latest issue includes kitschy movie and TV ads, bizarre toys (Afro-American History-Mystery Game!), scary foods (Sweet 'N Low Salad Dressing?), and more. **[www.artaugogo.com]**

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RICHARD LYNCH Cont. from PAGE 8

time — very touch and go for me during that.

SC: You don't want to go down because of a picture called ALLIGATOR 2.
Lynch: Nor do I ever want to be buried alive again, like in VAMPIRE. Remember, I was under the ground for my first scene in that movie.

SC: You made the 1997 film DIVINE LOVERS for an Indian company.
Lynch: Terrific movie. It was a joint Indian-American project by Babbar Subash, who was trying to break into the American market and introduce Indian culture to the West. It took me to India, which was a fascinating experience. I shot all over the country, and ended up in Poonam. Once again, a movie about parapsychology and reincarnation. I played something of a British artist at the turn of the century who wanted to recreate the artwork of the Kama Sutra that was painted on the temples. I saw those temples, and they were encrusted with all the erotic positions of that book. Which is funny, because their films are very antiseptic in regard to romance and sexuality.

SC: There aren't a lot of Western actors who get to experience the Indian film industry.
Lynch: It's as confusing as it gets. At any given time, any one of those actors could be on at least 20 other pictures. They'll get to the middle of a movie and stop — and that's it. But you're still on that movie, and they'll call you in a year to finish.

SC: BREAKING THE SILENCE (1998) is a Golan-directed movie made in Russia — what was your experience working there?
Lynch: Working in Moscow was very exciting for me. I'd always wanted to go there, and my theater roots are there, with the great acting teachers and the great theaters. I went back there for Golan and CRIME AND PUNISHMENT (2003), with John Hurt and Vanessa Redgrave. He directed a wonderful picture there — it just got tangled up in a lot of legalities and didn't get a release on it. BREAKING THE SILENCE was built around the taking of the Japanese embassy in Peru by revolutionaries.

SC: In recent interviews, you've expressed an interest in returning to the theater scene in New York. Is that still a consideration?
Lynch: Yeah, I've been flirting with the idea. I have a lot of friends there, and I'm thinking about a couple of productions, including a dramatization of LAST TANGO IN PARIS and maybe a revival of CAMINO REAL.

SC: You've said on more than one occasion that you feel like your talents have rarely been tapped to their fullest. When do you think you've come closest to expressing your fullest potential?
Lynch: (long sigh) Offbeat motion pictures like THE PREMONITION, a couple of specials I did for Spelling, a couple of STARSKY AND HUTCH episodes where I played multiple characters... THE FORMULA. Not all that much.

SC: Which projects are you most proud of?
Lynch: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, THE FORMULA and SCARECROW. I also don't mind THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER — it's a fun picture. Same with INVASION U.S.A. Oh, and I did a little half-hour show called WEREWOLF (1987), which I loved.

SC: Anything you've regretted doing?
Lynch: No. I refer to Edith Piaf, who said, *"I have no regrets."*

SC: Where would you like to be a year from now?
Lynch: (long pause) God, why did I just think of Dylan's line? "Knockin' on Heaven's Door?" (laughs) At the Academy Awards. I don't know. Ω

RICHARD RUSH Cont. from PAGE 15

the audience slightly conscious of it there, early in the film. I don't think that's a rationalization that I came up with afterwards, because I remember talking about it at the time. (laughs)

SC: It's been a long time since you directed a film. Are you ready to do another one?
Rush: I figure I am. I just tracked down a screenplay I wrote ten or fifteen years ago that I let slip because its political dynamic's immediate significance had kind of drifted away in time. It's about the Iran-Contra scandal, and I realized that I had dealt only with the Contra part of the scandal. It was during the Iran hostage crisis, and it was our first encounter with Muslim extremism. The anti-American crowds in the newsreels shouting and parading in the newsreels, shrieking at the gates of the embassy, are identical somewhat to what we have now. I realized we were very significant again.

I'm doing a quick rewrite and I intend to make it. Easier said than done, but I'm going to tackle it.

SC: Do you think it's possible to get a film made the way you want to do it, given the current environment in the industry?
Rush: I think the opportunities are scarce, but that it is always possible. The one thing that's remained consistent is that if you can somehow get the major casting involved, then they will go for it. It becomes automatically financeable. It's more difficult to get the major casting involved, though, because there are agents, lawyers, managers and a whole network of people that all of the stars have to prevent you from getting to them unless they happen to be good friends. And you don't want to impose on your good friends. But I think it's possible. I'll certainly find out! Ω

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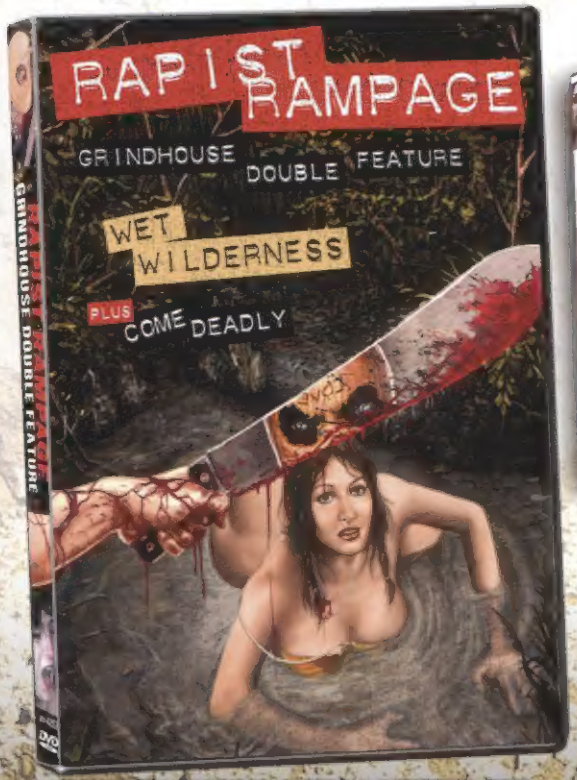

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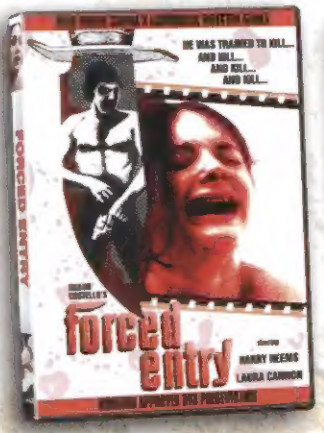

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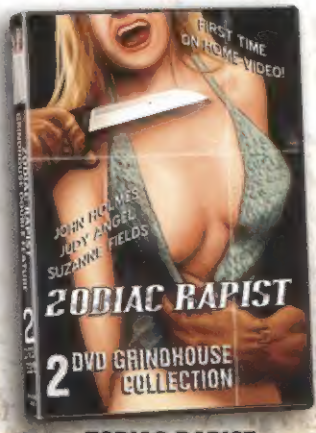

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